

LIGHT ON THE PATH
OF
SELF-REALIZATION

*(Containing the life-sketch of Shri Gajanana Maharaja and Spiritual
Experiences of his disciples and devotees)*

Complied By
AN ADMIRER

AND

PUBLISHED BY

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THALAKWADI, BELGAUM (S.M.C.)

SOLE AGENTS :

THE POPULAR BOOK DEPOT
Grant Road, Bombay - 7

[MAY, 1941]

PRAYER and THANKS GIVING

Oh Lord Almighty-the Maker and Dispenser of all things ! Blessed and hallowed be Thy Name. Thy will is done in heaven as on earth. On this auspicious occasion we remember Thee with love and reverence, and most humbly and respectfully pray to Thee. Make this work a complete success and grant happiness, peace of mind and the bliss of self-realization to the readers of this work and to all.

We thank most cordially the Great Sadguru Shri Narayan Saraswati Maharaja of Antri for inspiring this work and also his able, noble and worthy Disciple Shri Gajanana Maharaja of Nasik for helping us to carry it out successfully. We also thank all the admirers and disciples of Shri Gajanana Maharaja for giving us their spiritual experiences and also for supplying the 'sinews of war' for this publication; and also some friends whose names we are not permitted to disclose, for helping this publication in various ways.

Lastly, our thanks are also due to the staff of the Tatva-Vivechaka Press, Byculla, Bombay for executing this work neatly and promptly.

PUBLISHER

- OM -

PEACE BE TO ALL

Dedicated

To

The holy feet of the Great Guru

Shri Narayan-Saraswati Maharaja

of Antri

With most profound love and reverence.

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PREFACE

(Oh, Beloved Ones, the Spirit of the Nath Panth is quite different from that of all the sects of the world.)

I have been entrusted with the work of publishing this book-Gajanan Maharaja - His life sketch and his disciples' experiences - and writing a few prefatory words thereto. This I do in the spirit of love and humble service.

The Nath Sampradaya

Shri Gajanan Maharaja, the subject of this treatise, belongs to the celebrated Nath Cult or Sampradaya. The early history of this Sampradaya as well as the later one is shrouded in mystery and therefore definite information regarding the luminaries (important personages) of this Cult and other particulars, is lacking. Still we get here and there a few glimpses which throw a flood of light on the glory, grandeur, superiority, nobility and utility of the Nath Cult. To quote an instance : Jnanadev the premier poet-saint and prophet of Maharashtra and the author of the two most important works viz. (1) Bhavarthadeepika, the unique and rare commentary on Bhagwadgita, and (2) Amritanubhava, an independent philosophical work of real merit, was a ripe and mature product of this Nath Sampradaya. He gives in his epilogue to the Jnaneshwari or Bhavartha-deepika, the early history or origin of this Sampradaya as follows: -

"Once upon a time (we don't know exactly when) Adinath or Lord Shankar was imparting spiritual wisdom to his consort Shakti or Uma in the precincts of the Milky Ocean. This was overheard by Matsyendranath who was concealed there in the heart of a great fish. Matsyendranath then meet the broken-limbed Chouranginath on the Saptashringi mountains (about 25 miles from Nasik) and he imparted the spiritual treasure to the latter upon which he became whole (perfect). Then in order to enjoy himself the undisturbed peace (samadhi), he gave the spiritual secret to Gorakshanath (a towering personality in this Cult) from whom this spiritual lore descended to Gahininath who communicated it to Nivrattinath who in his turn passed it on to Jnanadeva."

The Warkari Sampradaya

There was just growing at the time of Jnanadeva (1271 to 1296 A. D.) another Cult - the Warkari Sampradaya of Pandhari. Jnanadev made an extensive tour all over the country in company with Namdev and helped to spread the teachings of the Warkari Sampradaya known as Bhagwat Dharma to such an extent that Jnanadev himself came to be recognized as the pioneer of this new Sampradaya. Namdev and later on Eknath and Tukaram tried their best to spread the teachings of Bhagwat Dharma far and wide. So these four poet-saints i.e. Jnanadev, Namdev, Eknath, and Tukaram became the main props of this Sampradaya. As one abhang beautifully puts it, Jnanadev laid the foundation of this edifice, Namdev raised the superstructure, Eknath hoisted the flag of the Bhagwat Dharma and Tukaram

became the pinnacle. On account of these four great personages, the teachings of the Bhagwat Dharma have permeated the whole of Maharashtra and its adherents are continually increasing ever since its inception and can be counted by lacs; but it must be remembered that the impetus and the force behind this movement - The Warkari Sampradaya - did really come from the Nath Cult. The Warkari Sampradaya has accepted in toto the Adwaitic and Yogic teachings of the Nath Cult and have added on Bhakti (Devotion to the Lord) to them.

So there was a bifurcation of this Nath Cult from Jnanadev onwards. The Warkari Sampradaya is working more in the limelight while the original Nath Cult is working in secret. The Nathpanthi successors of Jnanadev are, according to some authorities, as follow :- Satyamalnath, Gaibinath, Guptanath, Udbodhanath, Kesarinath, Shirdinkesari, Narharinath, Mahipatinath, Kashinath, Lakshmannath etc. The later successors of this Cult are not known and we cannot therefore trace the line unbroken down to Shri Gajanana Maharaja - the subject of this sketch.

The Place of Gajanana Maharaja in the Nath Cult

The spiritual Guru of Gajanan Maharaja is Shri Parmanand and that of Shri Parmanand is Shri Narayan Saraswati. When Shri Narayan Saraswati was passing away, he called his disciple Shri Parmanand and bade him continue the line and spread the teachings of the Nath Cult, assuming his own name i.e. Narayan Saraswati as they both were one. So Shri Parmanand is also called Narayan Saraswati. The name of the Guru of Narayan Saraswati is not known to us. So we, can't trace the spiritual genealogy of Gajanan Maharaja to the earlier Nath Teachers named above. There was another branch of the Nath Cut named Jalandarnath Branch (so named from Jalandarnath who received initiation from Shri Dattatreya) in addition to the Matsyendranath branch described above ; but we do not know any names of this branch except Kanifnath and Mainavati - the mother Raja Gopichand. Of these two branches we know for certain that Gajanan Maharaja belongs to the Matsyendranath branch and he seems to be an incarnation of Chouranginath, for firstly Gajanan Maharaj is deficient in limbs being lame, as Chouranginath was and secondly and mainly Gajanan Maharaja like Chouranginath received initiation direct from Matsyendranath. The story of this initiation may be briefly narrated.

When Gajanana Maharaja was 14 years old, his aunt took him to Antri near Chikhali (Berars) for the Darshan of the Guru Narayan Saraswati and while they were staying in a cave nearby Gajanana Maharaja had a vision, while he was resting there being half awake and half asleep. He saw himself being carried away to a deep cave through wind and rain, torrent and storm, when he saw a beautiful Samadhi adorned and worshipped with flowers. He then wished that the Sage resting therein should bless him, a poor and wandering soul - when lo ! the Samadhi broke in twain and out came Lord Matsyendranath. Gajanana Maharaja saw the figure distinctly as if with eyes wide open. Along with this Darshan, came the sound of Ajapa Japa ("Om

Hansa Soham”) which - reverberated into Gajanana Maharaja's ears. This vision was, soon after waking, mentioned to the aunt who took him immediately to the Guru Narayan Saraswati who was extremely pleased with the occurrence and he there and then formally initiated Gajanana Maharaja. This incident clearly shows the high place which Gajanana Maharaja occupies in the Nath Sampradaya.

The Main Points in Gajanana Maharaja's Life

Elsewhere in this treatise the reader will find a full life-sketch of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Here the main points in his life may be jotted down.

Birth and parentage :

Shri Gajanana Maharaja hails from the Inamdar-Gupte family of Pen, Vasi and other villages in the Colaba District. Towards the middle of the last century the condition of the family began to deteriorate and hence Mr. Murlidhar Bajirao, the father of Gajanan Maharaja, left the district and migrated to Malkapur (Berars) and sought Government service. Finding that too insufficient to maintaining the family decently, he studied law and after qualifying himself began to practise as a pleader at Yeotmal. He soon rose in the profession. His wife's name was Raju Bai. This couple gave birth to eight children, three daughters and five sons. The eldest son being Narayanrao, who later on became famous as poet, publishing his “Fulanchi Onjal” (Bunch or handful of flower – poems) under the pseudonym “Bee”, and the last son being Gajanana Maharaja who forms the subject of this treatise.

Childhood :-

Gajanan Maharaja was born at Yevotmal in 1892. In his third year a severe attack of small-pox rendered him a cripple for life, to the great sorrow of his parents and relations. Soon after both of his parents passed away leaving the cripple child Gajanan to the tender care and mercy of his aunt Balubai who was a widow since her childhood and who having no other near relations stayed with her sister, Gajanana's mother. The whole burden of caring and bringing up the family fell upon Narayanrao, the eldest brother and the aunt.

Youth :-

Gajanana Maharaja's thread-ceremony was performed in his ninth year. About this time, Rambhau, the second brother who was serving the "Ralli Brothers Co." at Chikhali, District Buldhana wrote to Narayanrao, asking him to bring the family for the Darshan of a great Saint and Yogi Shri Narayan Saraswati who was staying in the forest near the village of Jambhore, and Antri about 6 or 7 miles from Chikhali. Accordingly the whole Family moved there and took the Darshan of the Holy Saint who blessed them all and initiated Gajanana Maharaja. The spiritual vision described above took place

here. After hearing the vision the Saint blessed Gajanana Maharaja and prophesied that Gajanana Maharaja would be glorious and that he would save not only himself but many aspirants on the spiritual path also. As the subsequent history of Gajanana Maharaja's life shows, this prophesy has come true.

Some time later the family went to Borgaon (Nizam State) to attend the anniversary of the Guru of Narayan Saraswati. Here Narayan Saraswati gave an account of his Guru and told all the disciples how he made him leave his name (Paramanand) and assume Guru's name (Narayan Saraswati) as they both were, one. Shri Narayan Saraswati left this world in 1910. His age was then 127 years. The details of his life are given in the "Life-sketch" Chapter of the book.

On their way home, they stopped at Antri for some days and taking leave of the Maharaja (Narayan Saraswati) they returned to Chikhali with the brother Rambhau; thence they returned to Akola. Here Gajanana Maharaja received primary education upto the 4th standard (Marathi). Thence he went to Washim where his eldest brother was transferred, for continuing his education, but somehow or other, left attending the school.

Contact with Saints :-

At Washim Gajanana Maharaja saw Harihar Swami and also Nange Maharaja who was staying at the side of a tank called 'Futke Tale'. The latter's offering of prasad of wine tasted like milk to Gajanana Maharaja. From Akola where his brother Narayanrao was transferred, Gajanana Maharaja went to see Teli Maharaja at Darva and Khatiya Maharaja at Yeotmal and passed much time in their company. In this wise he saw many Saints and enjoyed their company, one of them being Tapkiri Buwa of Pandharpur. Later on he came in contact with Shri Gulabrao Maharaja, the blind (physically, but most awakened spiritually) saint of Berars. This Gulabrao Maharaja regarded himself as the daughter of Shri Jnaneshwar and consort of the Lord Shri Krishna ; and he appeared to Gajanana Maharaja in the form of his Guru Narayan Saraswati. This fact convinced Gajanana Maharaja that all true Saints are one in spirit.

When at Akola, Gajanana Maharaja, went to a secluded spot in the fort and passed many days and nights there in meditation and became an adept and perfect. He often visited the houses of Messrs Shivrambhau Gupte and Amrit Abaji Karnik, where many miracles are reported to have taken place. For details regarding them the reader is referred to the "Life-sketch" chapter.

Then Gajanana Maharaja went to stay in Bombay also and from there went to Kalyan and saw a Saint named Shri Rama Maruti. He was observing the vow of silence and therefore wrote down that Gajanana Maharaja and himself were the Avatars of Shri Chouranginath. Some time after, Shri Rama Maruti passed away. His disciples came to Bombay where Gajanana Maharaja was staying and requested him to accept the Gadi of Shri Rama Maruti at Kalyan; but he refused it for reasons of his own. This was in November 1918. Thenceforward Gajanana Maharaja continued and is still

continuing, by God's grace, his blessed work of initiating true aspirants and helping them on the spiritual path. The reader is referred to the full accounts of initiations, conversations, and experiences of the disciples that are given in the book.

Acquaintance with Gajanana Maharaja

I came in contact with Gajanana Maharaja in this wise. Early in 1938 I happened to see "Guru Shishya Vijnyana Deepika" a small Marathi pamphlet describing the life of Gajanana Maharaja and experiences of his devotees in the hands of my friend Mr R. K. Kamat. I casually turned over some pages of the book and found it very interesting. I then wrote to Mr. V. G. Vaidya, a disciple of Gajanana Maharaja and publisher of the book. I got the book for myself and read and re-read it. I then corresponded with the disciple and the master and became closely acquainted with them. I wrote also an appreciative article in Marathi regarding Gajanana Maharaja in the Weekly Marathi Paper Gorakshan of Poona. Early this year my friend Mr. Kamat saw Gajanana Maharaja who expressed a wish that I should also see him. That a Yogi like Gajanana Maharaja should express such a will was in my opinion a good compliment which I hardly deserved. Towards the middle of July last (1939) I went to Thana for some business and thence I went to Nasik by the week-end and saw Gajanana Maharaja and prostrated at his feet. I was most cordially received and welcomed by Gajanana Maharaja and all the disciples, for which I thank them all most heartily.

Personality of Gajanana Maharaja

As Gajanana Maharaja has not the least paraphernalia of a Yogi, Saint or Buwa and as he dresses well, wearing shirt, coat and neck-tie and looks more or less stylish, many people mistake him for an ordinary man; but on closer contact with him his due worth and merit stand out prominently and are recognised. Gajanana Maharaja looks very simple and unostentatious but, he is original and full of wit and humour. He always talks freely and without any reserve with all ; but with regard to his disciples, he criticizes them openly and does not spare them in the least. If his jokes and criticisms are closely observed they seem to have a chastening effect on the persons to whom they are addressed. As Gajanana Maharaja is perfectly egoless and guileless, he soon endears himself to all, who, when they come to know his real worth hold him in high esteem. He styles himself and signs as Kersuni (broom) and his principal mission in life is therefore to sweep the minds of his disciples clean and render them fit for self-realization. His life habits are very simple. He takes meals very rarely. Whenever there is a guest with him he sits down with him for meals when any special dish is prepared and then too he partakes very little of the things served. Otherwise he goes without food for days together He takes tea many times a day and is fond of smoking cigarettes now and then all through the day. Like a true Yogi he is not fond of wealth, women or fame. If any coins are offered he throws them back. He is a true bachelor as he does not care a jot for the fair sex. He has got very few women disciples. As he is by nature selfless and unassuming he shuns the limelight of fame and publicity and likes to work out his mission in secret.

Dhyana Yoga taught by Gajanana Maharaja

The Nath Cult advocates Dhyana Yoga or what is called Raja Yoga and the method advocated by Gajanana Maharaja is very simple, and is as follows :-

He wants the novice or disciple to sit comfortably. If the student can sit in any Asana such as Padmasana so much the better. Then the student is asked to put on Jalandhar Bandha (pressing the chin on the chest) and to start the Ajapa Japa (Soham) and fix the attention on any of the six plexuses in the body, viz., Muladhara Chakra ; Swadhisthana Chakra ; Manipura Chakra ; Anahata Chakra ; Vishuddha Chakra ; Ajna Chakra whichever is convenient to him. He should not attend to his breathing or Prana but rivet his whole attention on the Plexus chosen by him. When the student takes his position and starts to concentrate, Gajanana Maharaja will place his blessing hand on the student's head and help him on to get self-realization. It is this grace of the, Guru that takes the student onward on the path, and herein lies the worth and merit of Gajanana Maharaja as he has helped so many students. Some of them have written down their experiences which are published herewith.

Experiences of the Disciples

The Disciples wrote to Gajanana Maharaja letters embodying the experience they got in their practice. Almost all the letters were originally in Marathi. They have been rendered into beautiful and clear English by Mr. D. L. Nirokhekar, B.A., LL.B., M.B.E., Retired Law Instructor, Police Training School, Nasik for which sincere thanks are due to him. Of these disciples making their statement 4 are from Bombay, 1 from Calcutta, 2 from Dhulia, 3 from Poona, and the rest from Nasik. Four more experiences have since been added in 1940. I have seen most of the disciples of Nasik and they have verified to me the truth and veracity of their statements and I may mention here particularly that I have personally seen Master Madhukar Damodar Chitnis, a school going student of Nasik, going into Samadhi and remaining in that trance condition for about an hour and a quarter. I can therefore very well testify to the veracity of his statement. With regard to other statements one can see that they are not uniform and stereotyped ; they are quite different from each other, though they have some points in common. Each statement has its own characteristics as it depicts the experience that the maker of it got during his practice of meditation.

To those who are not familiar and who are quite unacquainted with the science of self-realization, these statements may read like fiction and they may regard the incidents described therein as visionary or imaginary ; but it is not so. The disciples are describing the experiences they got regarding self-realization and it is well known that the nature of such realization is like that of a fact, a true fact, which cannot be questioned or argued. And as truth is stranger than fiction these facts or experiences may seem strange or fanciful but in reality they are true facts.

Types of Mystical Experience

It is a pity that we modern Hindus have forgotten all about our ancient spiritual heritage and therefore fail to appreciate the mystical experiences on the spiritual path at their proper worth. Our ancestors, the ancient Seers of the Upanishads-the Rishis, had got these spiritual experiences thousands of years before Christ and they had formulated and classified them. If we search the Upanishad sacred mystic works composed in the early beginnings of time, we find four types of spiritual experience scattered in them, bearing respectively on the forms, colours, the sounds and the lights which are experienced or felt by the disciples during their spiritual endeavours. We give here a few instances. In Svetasvataropanisad, Chapter 2, Verse 11, there is a classic reference to the forms and lights seen by the disciple during his practice. We are there told that "mist, smoke, sun, fire, wind, fireflies, lightning, crystal and the moon arise as the premonitions or signs-of the revelation of Brahman." Similarly Brihadaranyakopanisad 11.3.6 tells us that to the vision of the advancing disciple appear such forms as those of saffron coloured robe, white wool, red Indragop beetle, flame of fire, a lotus flower and a sudden flash of lightning. Verily he is glorious who sees them. We may multiply similar instances from these sacred books ; but it is not-necessary to do so.

Now let us examine some of the disciples' typical experiences in the light of the above mentioned Upanishadic references.

(1) Mr. S. M. GADKARI

He says :- After the Japa began, clouds of different colours-appeared and peace came stealing over me. One day I saw Shri Ganapati and some flags and then one Vina (guitar) came in sight and after that the form of Shri Saraswati was seen with that Vina in her hand. I then saw (in a vision) Maharaja full of lustre. There was all around him a dazzling golden light etc,

(2) Mr. VINAYAK KASHINATH KHALE, Dadar

While I was repeating the Japa, I heard a sound proceeding from inside the head and immediately saw a flame of white colour which later turned into a ball of red colour. Concentration of the mind was not then disturbed and I felt a sort of joy. Some days later blue and red squares were seen and they are seen occasionally even now. My mind which has been extremely troubled by worldly troubles is calm which is nothing but the result of Sadguru's grace.

(3) Mr. VISHWANATH T. PATANKAR, B.A., LL.B., Dadar.

Inside then suddenly appeared a big sea of blue colour with great waves rolling about. I saw a boat named 'Soham' (I am He) on this sea and I saw you my Master guiding the boat having taken the helm in your hands.

Just close to the spot I saw the great Master Narayan Saraswati seated performing Sandhya adoration.

After that on that boat I got the Darshan of many Saints (for names see the statement) who bestowed upon me their blessings.

(4) Mr. BHABANICHARAN SIDHANTA of Calcutta.

He gave me the mantra of "Soham" and placed his hand on my head. As soon as he did so, there was a big sound "Soham". My mind became concentrated and void of ideas and a wave of extraordinary joy arose in my heart.

(5) Mrs. ANANDIBAI GUPTE, Nasik.

While I was repeating the Japa I saw three extraordinary lustrous forms; my eyesight was dazzled and hence I could not distinguish the faces.

(6) RAOSAHEB GUPTE, L.C.E., Nasik.

I have realized how the Ajapa Japa is going on and the mind also loses itself in it. Through the grace of my Sadguru I also see occasionally a spark of light.

I asked Maharaja about this, to which he replied that, those visions are only guides taking a Sadhaka towards the bliss of Self. The visions themselves are not the real things. These visions later disappear and the Sadhaka then experiences bliss of self. That is the real goal of human life.

(7) Mr V. K. MAHEGAONKAR, Nasik

He blessed me with his grace and made me practise meditation. Since then I began to see various visions in my meditation. My favourite deity Shri Datta, my late Guru Shri Narayan Maharaja of Kedgaon, and Shri Gajanana Maharaja, all these three always began to appear before me in my meditation and I worshipped them all mentally.

Mr. Mahegaonkar has asked certain questions to Gajanana Maharaja. Of these, Question No.4 with its answer is important and it is given here below :-

Question No.4 :- Is sight of visions a sure sign of real Self-Knowledge?

Answer :-No. Sight of visions is not the knowledge of Self; but these visions are as if sign-posts on the path of knowledge leading of God. While one sees them one comes to know that they are not the real Entity. In this manner all these visions slowly disappear. In other words they are understood to be illusive and false. Ultimately there is the realization that all this

(Universe) is nothing but Brahman and the seeker merges in the supreme Soul. That is the real Joy, that is the real Peace and that is the real Entity.

(8) Mr. V. G. VAIDYA, Pensioner, Nasik.

I began to repeat the Japa "Soham" and in the state of half-consciousness and half-sleep I began to hear the loud sound Soham and a gentle sound of bells. I asked Gajanana Maharaja what this sound of bells was. He gave me a practical illustration and said :- When we go to a temple we first sound the bells and take the Darshan of the Deity. Similarly this gentle sound of bells which fills your ears is the sound of Brahman. There are also ten other different kinds of sounds. You will get experience of them also. When you will begin to hear these different kinds of sounds then you will get the Darshan of the Supreme Soul by going into the, Brahmarandhra (the centre of the brain).

Miracles

A word about miracles. There is some mention made in these experiences regarding miracles such as issuing of fragrant smell at times when Gajanana Maharaja, is smoking cigarettes, showering of Bukka (Black scented powder), turning of wine into milk and boiled eggs into potato, etc. Gajanana Maharaja does not pay the slightest importance to such occurrences and brushes them aside calling them Bhuta-Chesta (devilish pranks). These miracles or siddhis come of themselves when the Sadhaka is progressing fairly on the path of self-realization; but the Sadhaka should take care to see that he is not lured away by them and that he continues his progress unimpeded.

Conclusion

To conclude, we say to the disciples of Gajanana Maharaja:-

"God-speed Brothers ! Go on, march on, you are on the right path, work hard and stop not till the goal of self-realization is reached." And to the readers of this little treatise whose curiosity may have been aroused by the perusal of these experiences and to others, we say in the words of the Seers of the Upanishads- "Arise, awake and approaching worthy and great Teachers (like Gajanana Maharaja) get enlightenment (Kath. 3.14) and if you fail to get this enlightenment (self-realization) now in this life, great destruction will follow ; but if you get it here and now, you are blessed-thrice blessed (Kena. 2.5)".

PEACE BE TO ALL

Dated 8-8-1939
Thalakwadi, Belgaum.

NAGESH VASUDEV GUNAJI.

POST SCRIPT

Since writing the above, I got from my friend Shrimant Laxmanrao Trimbakrao alias Raosaheb Mantri of Islampur, a small pamphlet, given to him (and published) by one Nath Maharaja Pandhariwale. This pamphlet gives a lot of information of the Nath Pantha, from which I cull the following :-

How Jnaneshwar was initiated into the Nath Pantha has already been mentioned above. After describing the same, the pamphlet goes on to describe how the other Maharashtrian Saints and others were initiated.

Re. Namdev : Saint Nilobaraya says that Jnaneshwar initiated Sopan and Muktabai and the latter initiated Wisoba Khechar, who in turn initiated Namdev with all members of his family including Janabai.

Re. Eknath :-

He himself gives his spiritual line as follows:-

Jnaneshwar, Satyamalnath, Bhojlingnath, Gayaninath, and Janardan Swami who initiated Eknath. He has also another version about this. Adi Narayan, the first and foremost Spiritual Teacher, initiated Bramha, who initiated the sage Atri, who in turn initiated his son Dattatreya. Dattatreya instructed and initiated Sahastrarajuna, Yadu and Janardanswami who initiated Eknath, From this it seems that Eknath had double spiritual initiation.

Now we come to Tukaram. He himself and his disciples-(Niloba and Bahinabai & c.) give the spiritual lineage as follows :-

Jnaneshwar, Satchidanandbaba, Vishwambharnath, Raghav Chaitanya, Keshav Chaitanya and Baba Chaitanya, the Guru, who initiated Tukaram.

The pamphlet then goes on to describe the other luminaries and Siddhas & c., who flourished before the time of Gahini-Nivritti. First it describes the initiation of Shri Shankaracharya. Shankaracharya was initiated by Guru Govind or Govindnath, who was initiated by Goudapadacharya, who was initiated by Shri Shukracharya, who was instructed by his father Krishnadwaipayana Vyasa. The mother of Vyasa was Matsyagandha, father Parusharamuni and brother Matsyendranath. See the story of Matsyendra and Matsyagandha as related in Mahabharat (Adiparva, Chapter 63). In this way, Shri Shankaracharya was connected with the Nath Pantha and therefore it is no wonder that he has refuted the doctrines of all other sects or Panthas except those of the Nath Pantha.

Contemporaneous with Shri Shankaracharya and after him, there came into being eighteen Akhadas-Spiritual Gymnasiums.

Their Names are :-

- 1) Kanfadi

- 2) Goraksha
- 3) Aghor
- 4) Aranya
- 5) Avadhoot
- 6) Ananda
- 7) Ashram
- 8) Indra-Udasi
- 9) Kalbheli
- 10) Godad
- 11) Nangagiri
- 12) Niranjan
- 13) Nirwan
- 14) Puri
- 15) Bharati
- 16) Raool
- 17) Bana
- 18) Sarabhangi

Before this the Nath Sampradaya had started eighteen Panthas (Sub-sects) as under : -

- 1) Satnatha
- 2) Dharmanatha
- 3) Satanatha
- 4) Gagulimanatha
- 5) Hajinath
- 6) Miskimanatha
- 7) Kadarnatha
- 8) Nathiyaswajanatha
- 9) Ramanatha
- 10) Eknatha
- 11) Jarovairageenatha
- 12) Gamnatha
- 13) Chalikanatha
- 14) Ganganatha
- 15) Hehetamarginath
- 16) Dhanajayanatha
- 17) Gajakathadinatha
- 18) Nagarjuna Natha

Even before this, there were some amongst the Nath Pantha, who devoted themselves to and were pioneers of Hatha-Yoga. Their names are :-

- 1) Anandbhairav
- 2) Chaurangeenath
- 3) Meenanatha
- 4) Viroopakshanatha
- 5) Vileshayanatha
- 6) Manthanabhairav
- 7) Siddhabuddha

- 8) Kanthadinatha
- 9) Korantaknatha
- 10) Suranandanatha
- 11) Siddhpada
- 12) Charapati
- 13) Kaneri
- 14) Poojyapada
- 15) Nityananda
- 16) Niranjana
- 17) Kapali
- 18) Bindunatha
- 19) Kakachandishwar
- 20) Allmanatha
- 21) Prabhudev
- 22) Ghadacholi
- 23) Tintini
- 24) Bhanukeenatha
- 25) Nayadev
- 26) Khandanatha
- 27) Kapalika
- 28) Taranatha

Among the Nath Pantha nine persons viz. :-

- 1) Prakashanatha
- 2) Visharmanatha
- 3) Anandanatha
- 4) Jnanaanatha
- 5) Satyanandanatha
- 6) Purnannadanatha
- 7) Swabhavanandanatha
- 8) Pratibhavanandanatha
- 9) Shubhaganandanatha

held other tenets, and five persons viz. :

- 1) Khimbadnatha
- 2) Dhangarnatha
- 3) Champanatha
- 4) Ghughunatha
- 5) Pranana

were metaphysicians (Spiritualists)

Between the times of these Hatha Yogis and Gahininatha, there flourished a conclave of 84 Siddhas of the Nath Pantha. Their names are : -

- 1) Kavishananda Siddha
- 2) Vagananda Siddha
- 3) Shagatananda Siddha

- 4) Vanchhananda Siddha
- 5) Gocharananda Siddha
- 6) Asitogananda Siddha
- 7) Batukananda Siddha
- 8) Barinanda Siddha
- 9) Ajmatananda Siddha
- 10) Guptananda Siddha
- 11) Chandananda Siddha
- 12) Krodhananda Siddha
- 13) Mahendrananda Siddha
- 14) Bhishanananda Siddha
- 15) Divyananda Siddha
- 16) Bodhinanda Siddha
- 17) Kalananda Siddha
- 18) Vilasananda Siddha
- 19) Siddhananda Siddha
- 20) Matrikananda Siddha
- 21) Saraswathananda Siddha
- 22) Shubhagananda Siddha
- 23) Paramchhatananda Siddha
- 24) Samarsananda Siddha
- 25) Mahananda Siddha
- 26) Bhomananda Siddha
- 27) Brahmananda Siddha
- 28) Shakananda Siddha
- 29) Chidananda Siddha
- 30) Purnananda Siddha
- 31) Shukananda Siddha
- 32) Banananda Siddha
- 33) Chaitanya Siddha
- 34) Rajachaitanya Siddha
- 35) Kalachaitanya Siddha
- 36) Namachaitanya Siddha
- 37) Divyachaitanya Siddha
- 38) Prajnachaitanya Siddha
- 39) Shamachaitanya Siddha
- 40) Vijnanachaitanya Siddha
- 41) Panchachaitanya Siddha
- 42) Atmachaitanya Siddha
- 43) Vairagyachaitanya Siddha
- 44) Prasapadachaitanya Siddha
- 45) Nirwanachaitanya Siddha
- 46) Medhachaitanya Siddha
- 47) Vidyachaitanya Siddha
- 48) Siddhachaitanya Siddha
- 49) Shrichaitanya Siddha
- 50) Prajna Siddha
- 51) Shri Nathasaraswati Siddha
- 52) Anandasaraswati Siddha
- 53) Medhasaraswati Siddha

- 54) Chidanand Siddha
- 55) Prajnasaraswati Siddha
- 56) Kalasaraswati Siddha
- 57) Sametasaraswati Siddha
- 58) Devasaraswati Siddha
- 59) Viratasaraswati Siddha
- 60) Sarasaraswati Siddha
- 61) Bhutabhairava Siddha
- 62) Viratabhairava Siddha
- 63) Swarajyabhairava Siddha
- 64) Samratlabhairava Siddha
- 65) Anandabhairava Siddha
- 66) Rurubhairava Siddha
- 67) Unmattabhairava Siddha
- 68) Udbhata Siddha
- 69) Mirashata Siddha
- 70) Vishwarupa Siddha
- 71) Rangawara Siddha
- 72) Devavara Siddha
- 73) Brahmawara Siddha
- 74) Rajewara Siddha
- 75) Siddhawara Siddha
- 76) Maprasiddha Siddha
- 77) Kapilee Siddha
- 78) Kama Siddha
- 79) Murtishata Siddha
- 80) Murtichalana Siddha
- 81) Chakravarti Siddha
- 82) Jogavati Siddha
- 83) Anugraha Siddha
- 84) Nigraha Siddha

From this it appears that before the time of Jnaneshwar, the abovementioned 84 Siddhas and other adepts of the Nath Sampradaya were doing the work of spiritual mission. At Alandi, the Samadhi of Jnaneshwar faces the Siddhas' Math and temple and the conclave of 84 Siddhas is round this Samadhi.

There are four kinds of Siddhas, viz.

- 1) Anand
- 2) Saraswatti
- 3) Chaitanya
- 4) Bhairavavara

as there are four kinds of Warkaris, viz.

- 1) Prakash
- 2) Swarup
- 3) Anand

4) Chaitanya

These four kinds of Warkaris respectively regard Laxmi Brahma, Vishnu and Sanak as their chief preceptor ; and the chief preceptor of these four (Laxmi & c.) is Adinath. Of the four kinds of Warkaris, two kinds viz., Prakash and Swarup consider themselves belonging to Nath Sampradaya, and the other two viz. Anand and Chaitanya consider themselves belonging to Siddha Sampradaya. Gahininath was supposed to belong to Siddha Sampradaya.

Some other luminaries of the Nath Sampradaya have also to be mentioned. Their names are : —

- 1 Udaynath
- 2 Dandnath
- 3 Eknath
- 4 Satyanath
- 5 Santoshanath
- 6 Kurmanath
- 7 Jalandarnath
- 8 Gopichandnath
- 9 Meenanath
- 10 Muktachandnath
- 11 Dharmanath
- 12 Adabanganath
- 13 Saranginath
- 14 Jagivanath
- 15 Nijananda Dinanath
- 16 Nayanathanath
- 17 Yadunath
- 18 Niranjananath
- 19 Gahininath

In the times of these and 84 Siddhas, there was in vogue, the study of Yoga and Adhyatma (Metaphysics). Some Nath Siddhas, such as Gopichand, Charpati, Chaurangi, Virupaksha and Vilesh had full faith in Yoga, while some Nath-Siddhas such as Dhigarnath, Ghughu-nath, Champanath, Khimbadnath, and Pranatanath believed fully in Adhyatma. As I said above the Warkaris have added on devotion and most of them now resort to this way (of devotion), neglecting the study of Yoga and Adhyatma.

Before these there flourished twelve preceptors (Acharyas) : —

- 1 Shri Bhairavnathacharya
- 2 Shri Matsyendranathacharya
- 3 Shri Jalandarnathacharya
- 4 Shri Joganathacharya
- 5 Shri Santnathacharya
- 6 Shri Suravarnanathacharya
- 7 Shri Mahendranathacharya

- 8 Shri Natakeshwarnathacharya
- 9 Shri Vaghodinathacharya
- 10 Shri Kalankanathacharya
- 11 Shri Ghadachudhinathacharya
- 12 Shri Aghornathacharya

As also, there flourished Nine Nath. They are : —

- 1 Shri Matsyendranath
- 2 Gorakshanath
- 3 Jalandarnath
- 4 Kanifanath
- 5 Bhartrinath
- 6 Revanath
- 7 Nagnath
- 8 Charpatnath
- 9 Gahininath

These are considered to be the incarnations of the Nine Narayanas
viz. :

- 1 Kavi
- 2 Hari
- 3 Antariksha
- 4 Prabuddha
- 5 Drumil
- 6 Chamas
- 7 Avirhotra
- 8 Pippalayan and
- 9 Karabhajan

mentioned in Part XI of Bhagwat.

These Nine Nath and Chauranginath, in all ten, were of Immaculate conception and were considered to be arch-leaders of the Nath Sampradaya.

Before the times of Shri Shankarcharya and also contemporaneous with him, there flourished another sect of Nath Sampradaya called the Bhairav Mela. It is related that King Krakach, a devotee of Kapala Bhairav, one of the eight Bhairavas viz.

- 1) Batu Bhairav
- 2) Rudra Bhairav
- 3) Chanda Bhairav
- 4) Atisang Bhairav
- 5) Krodha Bhairav
- 6) Kapala Bhairav
- 7) Samhara Bhairava
- 8) Unmatta Bhairav

had a tough tussle with Shri Shankaracharya and he invoked his Ishtam, Kapal Bhairav, while Shri Shankaracharya implored Shri Kalabhairavanath the chief preceptor of all the eight Bhairavas, who appeared on the scene and killed King Krakach. This story has been referred to by Shri Shankaracharya, in his hymns (1) Shri Bhairavashtaka (2) Shri Kalabhairavashtaka.

It is also related that the greatest of the Bhairavas Ravalnath Bhairav (or Ravagni Bhairav) first got himself initiated into the Nath Sampradaya and then initiated Kala Bhairav, the eight Bhairavas and other Bhairavas, viz.

- 1) Shri Shankar Bhairavnatha
- 2) Shri Martand Bhairavnatha
- 3) Shri Sparshasiddha Bhairavnatha
- 4) Shri Sonarsiddha Bhairavnatha
- 5) Shri Karakota Bhairavnatha
- 6) Shri Kamla Bhairavnatha
- 7) Shri Badala Bhairavnatha
- 8) Shri Bobhata Bhairavnatha
- 9) Shri Niguna Bhairavnatha

and initiated many sects of the Shakta Pantha, took with him all these and thousands of others, made with them an extensive tour in Maharashtra and established the reign of righteousness. So, the Bhairav Mela was also a sect of Nath Sampradaya working prior to other branches of the same.

Let me conclude this short survey of the Nath Sampradaya with a passing reference to the great Yogi Sohirobanath Ambiyé (A.D. 1714-1789), one of the leading luminaries of the Nath-Panth. He hailed from the town Banda (Sawantwadi State) and was working as a Talati (Kulkarni).

On his way to the capital (Sawantwadi), he met in the woods Gahininath or Gaibinath who blessed him and initiated him into the Nath Panth. Thereafter, he resigned his post and served God only. He travelled northwards, met the great Mahadaji Scindia, established a Math at Ujjain and disappeared about the year 1789 A.D. The following works, viz.

- 1) Akshaya Bodha
- 2) Mahadanubhaveshwari
- 3) Purnakshari
- 4) Advayananda
- 5) Siddhanta Samhita
- 6) Padasangraha

published by one Mr. Bhagwant Balkrishna Pai Raykar, show to what great heights of self-realization the sage Sohirobanath had attained. Those who wish to have a clear idea of the teaching of the Nath Panth, are advised to make a close and careful study of his teachings.

PEACE BE TO ALL

Thalakwadi, Belgaum)
Dated 1.12.1940)

NAGESH VASUDEV GUNAJI

FOREWORD

(Translated from the original Marathi)

“A sage is the ripest fruit of the tree of Universe.”
-Prabuddha Bharat.

“A bow to those good Souls, who enjoy the deep bliss of self. They shower down the water of Self-bliss in order to refresh and cool those troubled souls who are burnt by the heat of this worldly existence. They are ornaments to “Chaitanya”, they adorn the Science of the Knowledge of Brahman and they are the charming mansion where the Eternal God dwells. They do not expect from the people who come to them the acquisition of the four Sadhanas nor do they expect from them any proficiency in the Shastras. If only people have faith, they manifest the Light to them.”

- Eknathi Bhagwat

The ultimate goal of human life is to realise God and become one with Him. We may go further and say that it is the birthright of every human being. Swaraja is also our birth-right no doubt, but the greatest efforts are required to regain the Swaraja which we have lost. Swaraja is really our own but a great fight has to be put up for removing the obstacles in the way and the fight has to be carried on from generation to generation. Similarly in the case of the human soul Mukti or liberation or perfect independence is not a thing which has to be obtained and brought from outside. It is there all along with the Soul itself. But the Soul has lost its independence by faults of its own. It has become the slave of Prakriti and entirely dependent upon it. All the Shastras have as it were girded their loins for freeing the Soul from this slavery or bondage. But the Shastras are like sharp weapons. There are people who say that the bonds of dependence cannot be severed without the use of weapons. It is easy to say so but very difficult to put it in practice, as the habit of using weapons has been discontinued for generations. The same is the case with the Shastras. The human soul has been a stranger to these Shastras not only in this life but in the course of several previous lives.

Shastras have the power to transform a beast into a human being and a human being into God. The acquisition of the four Sadhanas is an infallible weapon for destroying dependence and for attaining liberation or Moksha. But it is very difficult even to hold this weapon, then what of using it ? Several lives would be required for the study of how to use this weapon.

The four Sadhanas or means of attaining Moksha are:-

- (1) the discrimination between eternal and non-eternal things;

- (2) disinterestedness regarding enjoyments in this as well as the next world;
- (3) possession of the six things viz., self-control, peace of mind etc., and
- (4) a keen desire for liberation or Moksha.

Deeply to think over what is eternal and to distinguish it from non-eternal, to have a clear idea about what is everlasting and what is evanescent, to distinguish between the soul and the non-soul, is the first of these means. To look upon all enjoyments in this world such as wealth, women, fragrant smells etc, and also all enjoyments in Swarga or heaven, such as nectar, celestial damsels, pleasure parties in the Nandan garden of Indra, with disgust and a feeling of nausea, is the second of these means. The acquisition of the six virtues viz., (1) Internal steadiness; (2) Control of the external senses; (3) Detachment; (4) A tendency to suffer calmly any evil or calamity; (5) Faith; and (6) Contentedness, is the third of these means. Just as a person who is without food for a week keenly desires food, similarly to have a keen desire for liberation or Moksha, is the fourth of these means.

Having completely acquired these means, the Sadhaka then has to go and bow to the feet of a Sadguru, who has realized the Supreme Soul and also who is well-versed in the Shastras and can explain things clearly to the disciples. Then the Sadguru having put the disciple to various difficult tests would confer his grace upon the disciples and expound to him the principle of the Mahavakya, the great formula, "Thou art That". The disciple then has to put the principle into actual practice. Ultimately having acquired complete knowledge he is to get liberation or Moksha. What tremendous trouble there is in all this ! If we take into consideration any one of these four Sadhanas, we are at once staggered at the vastness of its scope. Even our whole life would be insufficient for acquiring one of these Sadhanas. It can, however, be said that the fourth Sadhana viz., a desire to obtain liberation is possessed by almost every one to a greater or smaller degree. The reason is that no one likes bondage, because there is misery in bondage and happiness in freedom. We may go even further and say that freedom is happiness. Moksha has been defined in the Vedanta as the complete cessation of pain and the acquisition of the highest bliss. The Sankhyas define happiness as the absence of pain. Hence some experts in these Shastras say that the conception of Moksha in the Vedanta is positive while that in the Sankhya system is negative.

He alone acquires this Moksha or liberation, in other words, he alone acquires this highest bliss, who has a keen desire for it. When would this keen desire be generated ? It would be generated only when there would be intense consciousness of the misery brought on by the bondage of worldly existence. When a person keenly feels the pangs of misery, then only would he feel a keen desire to get himself free. This keen desire to be free is known as Mumukshutwa.

This Mumukshutwa however, cannot arise without the acquisition of the first three Sadhanas. When all these things are taken into consideration, it is no wonder that the human soul falls into a slough of despondency at the

stupendous hardness of the task. The human soul, no doubt, has a desire to get itself free from the bondage and to obtain everlasting happiness, but the human soul feels itself too weak to be able to suffer the troubles involved in the task.

Saints come into this world for the uplift of such weak, erring human souls. They do not require the test of the acquisition of the four Sadhanas mentioned above. Faith alone is quite sufficient. They take upon themselves the task of raising these poor human souls, as they (saints) are, as it were, oceans of compassion. They are ornaments to "Chaitanya". They adorn the science of the knowledge of Brahman and they are the beautiful mansion where God abides. Shri Eknath Maharaja has said the same thing in the quotation given above.

Shri Jnaneshwar Maharaja at one place has given expression to some very beautiful ideas while describing saints. He says, "The holy place Kashi is no doubt very liberal in granting Moksha. But it is necessary to die there. The Ganges no doubt removes sin and the heat of pain but it is necessary to plunge in it. On the other hand although Saints are oceans of compassion and holiness and although their depth is unfathomable, still the devotees have neither to die nor to sink. Their depth is unfathomable, still devotees do not sink but get Moksha immediately without having to die".

The long and short of it is that the greatness of Saints is unfathomable. When any one approaches them with proper submission, they do not stop to see whether he has acquired all the four Sadhanas. They only see whether he has full faith in them. If that is there, then they easily take him to the summit of self-realization. They make their devotees easily realize those high experiences, which are difficult to be obtained even by practising Yoga, or by performing sacrifices. We can get typical instances of this in the life of Shri Gajanan Maharaja. Such saints who have real experience themselves and who can make others experience self-realization are very rare indeed. To meet such saints shows great good fortune and it is the fruit of great merit acquired in previous lives. Otherwise even if such saints are near at hand it becomes very difficult to understand and recognize them. There is one other reason also which is at present operating to a great extent.

The Phantom of Buwabaji (False Saintship)

This phantom is at the present time dancing before the eyes of people. It may be even said that this phantom has as it were taken possession of many people in Maharashtra. False saints who deceive people have flourished in the past, they flourish at present and they would flourish in the future. No one would vindicate them or put in a good word for them. Saints like Eknath and Tukaram have made scathing remarks about them and have not spared them in the least. I have, however, to say that the hue and cry that has been raised, in this matter, attributing the degraded state of society to them and to the gullibility of people who put faith in them, is rather overdone. In my opinion society has been ruined much more by the prevalence of many other vices. If we honestly compare the havoc made in society by these other

vices with that caused by false saints, we would find that the latter are responsible comparatively for very little indeed. Drinking, prostitution, gambling, cheating and many other vices are eating into the very roots of the tree of society. Out of these, cheating pervades all trades. The innumerable ways in which unwary customers are cheated by traders, beggar description. It would be much better for humanity if societies would be formed for the destruction and hounding out of these other vices, as they have already been formed for hounding out and exposing false saints.

I wish to show that the ruin caused to society by false saint is comparatively very little. Geeta says, "Among thousands of men perhaps one makes an attempt to follow the spiritual path." This shows that not even one-thousandth part of society would be found going to saints. Let us make a calculation on a more liberal scale. For instance, let us assume that in a town having ten thousand inhabitants, about one hundred have a leaning towards spirituality. Out of these hundred there might be perhaps one who has risen to the status of a Buwa or Saint. Of course, some times a Saint or Buwa has more than a thousand followers. All these thousand followers are not fools or simpletons. Some of them are far more clever and educated than many of these critics of Buwabaji. To consider all these clever and educated men fools and dupes and to arrogate all wisdom to oneself is a thing of doubtful credit. Leaving aside these hundred people who are after saints, it would be interesting to see how among the other nine thousand nine hundred people, the other vices mentioned above are creating havoc and causing ruin.

A young relation of mine, who always took pleasure in running down Buwas, had come to Bombay in search of service. He is a handsome man with a very fair complexion and is very fond of music in which he has acquired a good deal of proficiency. He read one or two advertisements of Film Companies in the newspapers and paid a visit to the proprietors. He was examined in singing and dialogue. The proprietor of a famous Film Company held out good promise. Every day he began to visit the proprietor and spent three or four hours with him. The proprietor treated him very courteously and once he told him that he would be employed from a certain date. The young man communicated this intelligence with great pride to his friends, who insisted upon his giving a feast to them to celebrate his good fortune and the young man promised to do so. But on the date in question he was not given the appointment. A future date was given. In this way the appointment was postponed from one date to another. His friends then said to the young man that the said proprietor would ultimately deceive him and that if he would remain waiting to see his promises realised, he would have to wait for ever and would lose chances of service elsewhere. Upon this the young man gravely replied, "No, no. The man is not of that type. He has got himself declared an insolvent twice, each time his liabilities amounting to ten lacs of rupees. But before getting himself declared an insolvent, he gave fifty thousand rupees to each of his two keeps." When I heard this, I clapped my hands and said, "Just see what he says. He considers a man who has twice got himself declared an insolvent and given fifty thousand rupee to each of his two mistresses, a reliable gentleman, and considers people who give five or ten or sometimes five hundred rupees to a Buwa as fools. It is just possible

that a particular Buwa may be a rogue and a hypocrite. If he is so, he would surely suffer for his sins. But would the people giving the Buwa money suffer? They are sure to get the benefit of the pure and holy feelings which prompted them to do so. What would be the nature of the feelings of a man who gives money to his mistresses and what would be the result of his actions?" The young man got non-plussed and being unable to give a suitable reply, remained silent. His friends there made him a butt of ridicule and from that day he left off criticizing Buwas. As predicted by his friends the young man was ultimately deceived by the Film proprietor.

It is beyond doubt that false Buwas who trade on the gullibility of simpletons would suffer for their sins. Similarly those whose minds are warped by the idea that all saints are false would also suffer. Dishonest people are found in all grades of life. There are traders, doctors, pleaders and patriots (so-called) who are cheats. But that does not mean that a person would be justified in believing all traders, doctors, pleaders or patriots to be dishonest. It would be equally foolish to believe that all saints are false and dishonest. Thoughtful and considerate people, therefore, should proceed very cautiously before forming their opinion.

There is a Hindi couplet to the effect that one should be very careful in dealing with fire, kings, water and saints. If one acts with proper care and caution one is fully benefited, if otherwise one is sure to be completely ruined.

Shri Tukaram also has sounded a note of warning to people who want themselves to be benefited. There are many Abhangas of Tukaram expressing his keen desire for the company of Saints. The famous line, "I do not desire for liberation or wealth; but grant to me that I would always enjoy the company of Saints," is typical of such Abhangas. In the Abhanga given below, Shri Tukaram has, however, given a warning not to dwell in the company of Saints and he has also given his reasons in the same Abhanga. Those who desire their everlasting good should carefully and ponder over this Abhanga.

"We should not dwell in close contact with Saints lest some faults or sins may stick to us. Once these faults or sins stick to us they cannot be washed away, and the whole of our merit previously acquired is lost thereby. Tuka says that Saints should be saluted from a distance and their image should be treasured in our hearts."

We shall now try to explain the real sense of this Abhanga. However great a Saint might be, the original characteristics of his nature as seen in outward actions are generally not changed. Ordinary people who identify themselves with their body cannot conceive of the state of Saints who have gone beyond this body-consciousness. Hence ordinary people see merits and faults in the outward actions of saints. These outward merits or faults are really due to Prakriti, while Saints live, move and have their being in the Supreme Soul which is beyond Prakriti. Looking merely to the outward actions of Saints, ordinary people begin to censure Saints, owing to which they lose all their previous merit. Other sins can be washed away by some form of

Prayaschitta (atonement) but there is no atonement for the sin of censuring Saints. Of course it is quite true that one should not indulge in the slander of any one. The Mahabharata says, "By censuring others one incurs the sin of killing others and by praising oneself one incurs the sin of self-slaughter." Those who sincerely desire their own real good should, therefore, never contaminate their tongue by censuring Saints. Shri Krishna says to Uddhava, "He who wishes to be saddled with all the sins in the three worlds, may slander Saints by his mouth, if he likes." (Eknathi Bhagwat, Chapter 27).

Then what should a man do ? Should he prostrate himself at the feet of every one who wears saffron-coloured clothes ? As soon as he sees a Buwa having a beard or matted hair or besmeared with sacred ashes, or having rosaries of Tulsi or Rudraksha beads, should he at once consider him a saint and fall at his feet ? Shri Tukaram says, "No, no. Do not do so. If you cannot bring yourself to put your faith in him, do not even go near him. Merely salute him from a distance. That would be a safe course to follow. But do not unnecessarily run the risk of losing your whole merit by slandering him." The main idea is that those alone, whose minds would remain unaffected at the appearance of faults or merits in the outward actions of saints, may dwell in close contact with saints. Others should remain at a distance. There are very few people who have a liking for the company of Saints, and among these few, a person who can stand the above mentioned test would be very rare indeed.

Sometimes false saints do take undue advantage of the above mentioned principle that one should not look to the merits or demerits of saints. But it cannot be helped. We should be, careful of not falling into the clutches of such false saints. But it must be remembered that in trying to be too careful, we should guard against developing a too suspicious tendency of mind which would make us see faults where they do not exist. We should therefore, incessantly pray to God, who is in our hearts, to grant us a clear angle of vision and bring us in contact with real saints.

In the fifth chapter of Pandava-Pratap, a poetical work in Marathi based upon the Mahabharata, twelve varieties of Gurus are mentioned:

(1) Dhaturwadi :-

He orders his disciple to visit places of pilgrimage and makes him go through various courses before he confers the knowledge of self upon him.

(2) Chandana :-

Just as a sandal tree gives its own sweet scent to the trees near it (with the exception of a few trees like the bamboo etc.), similarly he by his company raises up persons who come in contact with him (with the exception of those who have no faith in him).

(3) Vichara :-

By explaining the distinction between the eternal and the non-eternal and making the disciple-think, he leads the disciple to self-realization.

(4) Anugraha :-

He confers his grace upon his disciple owing to which the disciple gets self-realization without much effort.

(5) Parees :-

Just as this stone (Philosopher's Stone) by its mere touch turns iron into gold, he by his mere touch grants divine vision to the disciple.

(6) Kacchhapa or Tortoise :-

Just as the female tortoise merely by looking at her young ones nourishes them similarly he grants knowledge merely by directing his auspicious glance at the disciple.

(7) Chandra or the Moon :-

Just as the moon-stone begins to ooze at the rise of the moon, similarly he becomes full of compassion and disciples even at a distance are saved thereby.

(8) Darpana or the Mirror :-

Just as we can see our face as soon as we look into a mirror, similarly by merely looking at him, the disciples get self-knowledge.

(9) Chhayanidhi :-

There is a huge bird known as Chhayanidhi. When it is moving in the sky, if its shadow falls upon any person that person becomes a king. Similarly if the shadow of this Guru falls upon any one that person gets the kingdom of self-bliss.

(10) Nadanidhi:-

Nadanidhi is a kind of jewel. If the sound of any metal is heard by it, that metal is turned into gold. Similarly as soon as this Guru hears the passionate cry of a Mumukshu, that Mumukshu gets divine vision.

(11) Kraunchia Bird :-

The female Krauncha bird having kept its young ones on the sea-shore wanders away for month's together. Every now and then it

looks at the sky and remembers its young ones and the young ones get nourishment owing to this mere remembrance; similarly this Guru saves his disciples merely by remembering them.

(12) Suryakanta :-

Just as the Sun's rays passing through the Sun-stone burn cotton on which these rays fall, similarly those persons, on whom glances from the eyes- of this Guru fall, go at once into the state of Videhattwa i.e. they become unconscious of their body and get merged in Samadhi.

Most of these varieties are exemplified in the person of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Leaving aside the first three, the remaining nine varieties point to Saints of extraordinary powers. A perusal of the life sketch of Shri Gajanana Maharaja would convince us that he is one of these extraordinary personages.

There are some Gurus who divulge the secret path known to them (of attaining Moksha) only to those who make proper submission to them and accept initiation at their hands. They would not even condescend to talk with a person who is a disciple of another Guru and a follower of another tradition. Such a person would be treated as if he is a culprit or he would receive the treatment which a step-mother metes out to her step-child. Such is not the case, however, with Shri Gajanana Maharaja. The man who comes to him may belong to any tradition or may be any Saint's disciple. If he approaches him because his spiritual aspirations have remained unfulfilled, Shri Gajanana Maharaja is sure to lend him a helping hand and lead him to the proper path. There have been various instances of disciples of other Gurus having approached Shri Gajanana Maharaja and obtained proper guidance from him. Just as an affectionate aunt to whose care the motherless-child of her sister is left, first of all feeds that child even leaving aside for the moment her own child, similarly Shri Gajanana Maharaja treats the disciples of other Gurus. I have personally noticed some instances of this kind. Some of such disciples of other Gurus had, owing to some defects of their own, remained backward in spiritual progress, some owing to defect in the instructions or the inability of their Guru to lead them further. The case of Mr. Krishnaji Govind Kurdukar, a Vaidya of Sangamner, is remarkable and deserves special mention. We are struck with, wonder at Mr. Kurdukar's capability, Vairagya even in the heyday of youth, his extraordinary progress in Hatha-Yoga, his patience and the persistency of his strenuous efforts. For three months he remained on only one seer of cow's milk in the whole day, then for six months he only took syrup of dried grapes and then for 108 days he remained only on water. When he sat for contemplation in a particular posture, his whole body lifted itself up to a height of a cubit and a half from the ground and remained there without any support. Such things are very uncommon and rare indeed. Dr. Bhandarkar, Civil Surgeon of Indore, who examined Mr. Kurdukar at the end of those 108 days remarked that he had never before heard of the case of a person living on only a small quantity of water having no adverse effect upon his health, enjoying full buoyancy of spirit and feeling no exhaustion although

putting up continuous physical work commensurate with his bodily strength. The case of Mr. Kurdukar throws clear light on the greatness of our Yoga Shastra. The account given by Mr. Kurdukar of his progress clearly shows that perfect health and wonderful powers can be acquired by the practice of Yoga. The account furnishes much food for thought to those who have a desire to go deep into the matter.

There is another thing which becomes clear from Mr. Kurdukar's case. Whatever benefits a person may derive from the practice of Hatha-Yoga as far as bodily fitness or even some miraculous feats are concerned, Hatha-Yoga is of very little use in attaining the real bliss of self which lies beyond body-consciousness.

Various powers are acquired by practising concentration on various things. In the Fifteenth Chapter of the Eleventh Skanda of the Bhagwata, Shri Krishna has described to Uddhawa at full length the various kinds of Siddhis (Miraculous powers) which can be thus acquired. Shri Eknath has written a very beautiful commentary on the above. There are eight big Siddhis, ten subordinate ones and five which may be considered as insignificant. Shri Eknath has in his commentary lucidly explained what kind of concentration is to be practised for acquiring these Siddhis. There is no doubt that these powers can be obtained. But they are obstacles in the path of self-realisation. Shri Krishna says, "He who desires to obtain greatness in the world would undergo the trouble of acquiring these Siddhis while he who has a firm desire to reach me would never turn towards them. I have described at great length the various Siddhis and the methods of acquiring them only to make you understand that Siddhis are only obstacles on the path leading to me." (Shri Eknathi Bhagwata, Chapter XV). After describing these various kinds of the big, the subordinate and the insignificant Siddhis, the greatest of all Siddhis, which is the real goal of human life, viz. self-realization, has been explained at full length.

The greatest of all Siddhis is the realization of the highest bliss. All efforts of the human being are directed towards obtaining happiness. The various Siddhis described above also contribute to happiness. But it is necessary to examine the different kinds of happiness. There are three kinds of delight or happiness; viz., (1) sensual delight or pleasure; (2) pleasures of the mind; and (3) pleasures of the intellect. The first of these is peculiar to the beasts, the second to human beings and the third to the Gods. There is a happiness beyond all these three, which can be experienced only by the purified intellect. The Bhagwad-Gita describes it as, "beyond the senses and capable of being grasped only by the intellect." This happiness falls to the lot of Saints and devotees alone. "A Yogi may acquire the power of becoming invisible in one place and of suddenly manifesting his presence in another He may thus in a moment go from Mathura to Kashi. At the time of his demise, Prana may pass out through the Brahmarandhra and he may then go to the Satyaloka ; but such a Yogi is still imperfect, he is not a real disciple of a Sadguru."

The happiness which is obtained by the acquiring of these Siddhis is not everlasting and hence does not deserve to be styled the highest bliss. Kabir considers a person satisfied with the happiness obtained from Siddhis as raw or imperfect and does not call him a real disciple of Sadguru. It is therefore, necessary for a Sadhaka who desires his real good not to pursue this happiness which is to be obtained from Siddhis but to try to obtain self-realization which is the highest bliss. This is the real aim of human life. Shri Krishna explains the method of reaching this goal in the following words :-

“A Sadhaka who concentrates his pure mind on me, the Brahman without attributes, obtains the highest bliss in which state all desire comes to an end.” (Shri Bhagwata, Eleventh Skanda, Chapter XV).

Shri Eknath comments upon this and says that Chitta represents the Sattwa quality, Senses represent the Rajas quality and Sensual Objects represent the Tamas quality. Hence a Sadhaka who contemplates upon the Brahman which is without attributes and is thus beyond the three qualities, obtains everlasting and complete happiness. This natural bliss of the self is covered over and hidden by the three qualities. Hence these three qualities are obstacles on the path leading to the highest bliss. A Sadhaka, therefore, who lives aside these three qualities and contemplates upon the Nirguna Brahma, obtains the highest, bliss. Nirguna is to be understood to mean “having divine attributes which are beyond and quite different from the attributes of Prakriti. The Saguna form of God is not belonging to Prakriti but it is beyond Prakriti and divine. Shri Krishna says in the Gita : “He who truly understands my divine birth and actions, after his death reaches Me. He is not born again.” (Gita IV, 9). By contemplating upon Brahman, Sadhaka obtains the highest bliss and all his desires become merged into that bliss. At the rise of the Sun, the moon with all the stars disappears. Similarly all the desires of the Sadhaka disappear being merged in that highest bliss. The desire for sensual pleasures is as it were ashamed to show itself and vanishes then and there. Shri Eknath says:

“When the highest bliss is obtained, all desires become merged just as at the rise of the Sun, all the stars and the moon disappear. All the innumerable desires of the Sadhaka get merged in the vast ocean of the Supreme Bliss, while all idea of sensual pleasures is ashamed to show itself and instantaneously dwindles away.”

Sadhakas are earnestly requested to read carefully the whole commentary of Shri Eknath on the 17th verse of Chapter XV of Shri Eknathi Bhagwata.

The actual experience of this supreme bliss cannot be obtained by reading thousands of books or by resorting to Japa or Tapas. The only way is to obtain the grace of a Sadguru. Swami Vivekanand says : “This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The Soul can only receive impulse from another Soul and from nothing else.”

Now this relationship between a Guru and his disciple is not a thing which is brought about by merely human effort. It is really brought about by the will of God. As it has been said by a modern Marathi playwright that before the birth of a girl the creator brings into this world the husband meant for her, similarly, God makes previous arrangements of a Guru for a disciple. Among Gurus there are what are called Niyata Gurus (fixed or settled Gurus) and Aniyata Gurus (not fixed or settled). Just as in the case of a girl, before she is actually married various marriageable men are approached with proposals, similarly a Mumukshu also has to approach various Saints before he is actually graced by his Sadguru. The story of Shri Avadhuta who made 24 Gurus for the purpose of learning various lessons has been narrated in the eleventh Skanda of the Bhagwata and is well-known. By coming in contact with those Aniyata Gurus a Sadhaka's mind becomes developed and endowed with those virtues which are characterised by the name "Daivi Sampat" in Chapter XVI of the Gita. Then he becomes blessed by the grace of his Niyata Guru, understands the great principle of the unity of the human soul with the Supreme Soul and attains perfect self-realization. This Niyata Guru is the Sadguru, who is so called because he makes the disciple realize the "Sat Vastu" i.e. the Everlasting Thing.

"He should be considered as the real Sadguru who makes the disciple experience perfect calmness of mind by making him realize his own Self. For no other reason should one person be considered as the Sadguru of another." (Eknathi Bhagwata, Chapter XII).

In the Puranas and also in historical times we see various instances illustrating the proposition mentioned above that the relationship between a Sadguru and a disciple is not a result of human effort but is decreed by the Divine will. Shri Nivrutti Nath got Gahininath as his Sadguru almost in his childhood and that too without any effort on his part. Shri Changadeva, who had lived in the world for fourteen hundred years through powers acquired by the practice of Hatha-Yoga, was blessed by Muktabai and then got real self-realization. Nivrutti, Jnanadeva, Sopana and Muktabai, these four saintly personages had taken incarnations for the uplift of the world. Still their powers were of no use to Namdeva, whose Sadguru as decreed by Divine Will was Visoba Khechar. Namdeva had to go to Visoba, being ordered to do so by his God Vithoba and it must be remembered that this Visoba Khechar was the disciple of Jnanadeva. Of similar significance is the instance of Vaman Pundit who went to Shri Tukaram but not being satisfied there was sent by Shri Tukarama to Shri Ramdas. There too Vaman Pundit did not get thorough satisfaction. Shri Ramdas even manifested himself to Vaman Pundit in the terrible form of Shri Hanuman, in order to dispel the dirt of doubt from his mind. But it was of no use. When all his efforts proved useless, Shri Samarth Ramdas dived deep into himself and having come to know that Vaman Pundit's Niyata Guru was not himself, sent Vaman Pundit to Malaya Mountain, where Vaman Pundit met Sachchidananda Swami, was blessed by him and attained real peace. The principle to be gathered from such instances is that the relationship between a Sadguru and his disciple is brought about by the Divine Will in consonance with their connections with each other in previous lives. Before seeking out a Sadguru, a person should direct all his efforts in

acquiring the qualities of a good disciple. Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa says that a Sadguru seeks out disciple whose mind is fully prepared to receive his high instruction.

It also sometimes happens that even though the disciple is not in the least prepared, a Sadguru suddenly meets him and blesses him. What sort of preparation was made by Shri Nivrutti, who was almost a child, when Shri Gahininath met him in a cave at Trimbakeshwar and conferred his grace upon him ? Now Shri Nivrutti and his brothers and sister being considered as incarnations, their initiation may be explained away on that ground. But what about Shri Sohirobanath? He was an ordinary Talathi in Sawantwadi State. While proceeding to the capital, Sawantwadi, from his own village of Banda, for producing the annual accounts for inspection, he met Shri Gahininath in the jungle and was immediately blessed by him. If we, however, ponder deeply over such instances, we shall come to the conclusion that although to all appearances such cases appear to be purely accidental, still the root cause is to be found in merit acquired and connections formed in previous lives. If we look to the life of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, we get a confirmation of the above mentioned idea. His parents died when he was very young. His aunt brought him up and placed him at the feet of Shri Narayan Saraswati. At this time Shri Gajanana Maharaja was only twelve years old. When he was about three years old he had a severe attack of small-pox which had made him lame and a cripple.

As soon as Shri Narayan Saraswati saw this boy, he remarked, "This boy is a Yogi of the Nath Pantha and has practised Dhyana Yoga in his previous life. After some years he will become well-known and will guide many aspirants on the spiritual path."

These prophetic words have now been proved to be true. What is the principle which is to be gathered from this instance? It is this that you cannot carry on trade without capital. This capital accumulated in previous lives is an invisible treasure. All saints have not the power of knowing the extent of this invisible accumulated capital. On that account, however, they should not be considered as being on a lower level. This power viz. of knowing the past, the present and the future, is acquired by the practice of Yoga, or by intense devotion or even by the continuous repetition of the sacred name. The sage Valmiki is a clear instance on the point. He got this power merely by the repetition of the name of Rama (and that too by the letters of the word Rama being transposed into Mara). It is well-known that he wrote the Ramayana before Rama was born. Some people say that Valmiki wrote the Ramayana prior to Shri Rama's birth and Shri Ram acted according to the Ramayana in order to respect the word of his devotee. This view is, however, not correct. It is not true too say that Shri Rama acted according to the Ramayana but the truth is that Valmiki wrote the Ramayana knowing beforehand how Shri Rama would act. A Yogi who has acquired the Yogic vision can see before his mind's eye pictures of the events of the past as well as of the future. Even in the present times there are Yogis having such powers. Shri Narayan Saraswati was a yogi of this type. How his prophetic words regarding Shri

Gajanana Maharaja have proved true, can be clearly understood from the life sketch of Shri Gajanana Maharaja given in this book.

Miracles

Sometimes miracles are seen to happen at the hands of great devotees or saints. Some Vedantins think that all miracles are brought about by the use of Siddhis, and Siddhis being obstacles on the path of self-knowledge, they express their disapprobation regarding such Siddhis and to some extent are even afraid of them. Now it is no doubt true that Siddhis are obstacles on the spiritual path but we must distinguish between different kinds of Siddhis. The Siddhis acquired by the practice of Hatha Yoga by Changadeva are quite different from the Atma Siddhi of Shree Jnanadva. Shri Samartha Ramadas says :

“If a Sadhaka's mind fixes itself firmly on the one Everlasting Entity, he naturally gets powers even though he may be following the path of knowledge.”

He goes further and pointedly says that Saints, who themselves have no desires should acquire powers by the practice of various vows, etc., for the good of the public.

“Various vows should be practised, places of pilgrimage should be visited and powers should be acquired and increased but there must be the strength of Vairagya (detachment) as the basis of all these things.” (Dasabodha-10.7.13).

Shri Ramana Maharshi, the well-known living Saint of Arunachalam, was once asked a similar question regarding Siddhis. The question was : “Is there any opposition between Jnana (knowledge) and Siddhis or are they related in any other manner ? “ He gave the following answer : “To a Jnanin (one who has realized his Self) the world is not something which has an existence separate from the Soul. So he looks upon miracles in the same light, merely as manifestations of the Soul.

“To a sage the world and its phenomena are nothing but the manifestation of the Soul. So Siddhis and their workings also are looked upon by him as the manifestations of the Soul.” (Shri Ramana Gita 11.21).

The Different Varieties of Siddhis

In the 15th chapter of the eleventh skanda of the Bhagwata, Shri Krishna has described to Uddhava eight big Siddhis, ten subordinate ones and five which are insignificant, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa has also described different kinds of Siddhis and Siddhas as given below :-

- (1) Tapas-Siddha, i.e., those who obtain Siddhis by the practice of penance ;
- (2) Yoga-Siddha, i.e., those who obtain Siddhis by the practice of yoga ;

- (3) Mantra-Siddha, i.e, those who obtain Siddhis by the repetition of certain mantras ;
- (4) Aushadhi-Siddha, i.e., those who obtain Siddhis by swallowing or taking certain peculiar herbs or medicines;
- (5) Akasmika-Siddha, i.e., those who suddenly without any efforts of their own get Siddhi, just as a person may accidentally stumble upon a treasure ;
- (6) Kripa-Siddha, i.e., those who get Siddhi by the grace of a Saint which grace is obtained by serving him ; and
- (7) Janma-Siddha, i.e., those who have Siddhis from their birth. They have not practised any penance or yoga or repeated any mantra in this life but these Siddhis as it were wait upon them of their own accord.

If we look minutely into the life of Shri Gajanana Maharaja we shall have to come to the conclusion that he is a Janma-Siddha. It has been already mentioned that when Shri Narayan Saraswati saw Shri Gajanana Maharaja for the first time, he remarked that he (Shri Gajanana Maharaja) was a Yogi in his previous life. Shri Gajanana Maharaja in this life has not practised penance or yoga or japa, nor has he served any great Saint. He had already with him the capital accumulated in previous lives. Shri Narayan Saraswati's Darshan served merely to bring into light this old capital. This, however, does not in any way belittle the importance of Shri Narayan Saraswati in Shri Gajanana Maharaja's life work. The disciple is always under a deep debt of gratitude to his Guru.

In such cases the Sadguru as it were does the duty of a Nazir of a District Court. A minor's estate is in his possession. When the minor becomes a major, the Nazir hands over his estate to him. He does not give anything out of his own pocket.

“Tuka says it is no use making haste.
The proper time must arrive.”

This proper time in the case of an aspirant on the spiritual path comes when his mind becomes prepared for being the recipient of knowledge. Then he becomes a major. When he thus comes of age, the Sadguru merely points out to him the place where his own treasure has been hidden and makes him realize himself. “Your treasure is very near you. Only you have forgotten the place where it is lying.” (Tukaram). Sadgurus never think that they have given to the disciple anything of their own nor do they consider that they have in any way heaped obligations on the disciple. On the contrary they feel as it were a sense of relief in having safely returned the deposit to the rightful owner, in having been freed from a heavy responsibility placed upon them by the Divine Will and in having thus done their duty. Sadgurus who fully know the Divine Laws have these characteristics. But how should a good disciple act? Shastras which lay down rules of the Divine Law and Saints who know the Divine Law have described the characteristics of a good disciple. They say :

“The Upanishads have laid down in emphatic words that the knowledge of Brahman can never be obtained without the help of a Sadguru. It is true that a boat conveys people across water but unless it is steered by a skilful helmsman, of itself it would not be able to cross to the other side, even though persons of great importance might be sitting in it. Similarly our own soul is naturally near us. Still those who have had self-realization have always obtained it by putting their faith in a Sadguru who made them recognise their own self and realize it. If an aspirant thinks that a Sadguru is one out of the many means which lead to the goal of self-realization, he is a fool and he would never be able to attain the goal. To think that a Sadguru is a means to an end, that the end or goal is something different, is the surest way to utter ruin.”

The reason of this principle has been clearly explained in the following verse :

“He (viz. the Sadguru) who always enjoys the bliss of self and lives and has his being in it, is not different from the Self at all.”

(Eknathi Bhagwata, Chapter X).

In the Vedas and various other Shastras we often see it laid down that a Sadguru should be approached for obtaining the knowledge of Brahman or the Soul or God. These words lead us to think that a Sadguru is a means and the Brahman, Soul, or God is the end to be obtained. Although this idea is good as, after all, it makes the necessity of a Sadguru clear, still Shri Eknath Maharaja's delicate and tender heart could not put up with it and hence he has given vent to the above mentioned sentiments. He does not like the idea that Sadguru is a means and Brahman is the goal. He has also given his reasons in the last verse (given above) why he considers Guru and Brahman as one. But in another place he goes even further and says that to consider Guru and Brahman to be on the same level is also not desirable.

“To say that Guru and Brahman are on the same level or of the same kind is also not quite true. Brahman is recognised as such only through the words of a Sadguru i.e. Brahman gets its Brahmatatwa through the Sadguru. Hence the idea of the two being similar or on the same level has no foundation to stand on as the sense of difference is altogether absent.”

(Eknathi Bhagwata, Chapter III).

Now that Brahman, for attaining which so many efforts have to be made and troubles undergone, is pervading everywhere. It is inside as well as outside a human being. If so, then why should the human soul suffer so many agonies ? Why should it be smothered in the vicious circle of births and deaths ? The reason is that although Brahman is all-pervading, still it is of no use as it remains unknown. Hence Moksha is not obtained by means of Brahman but it can be obtained only by the knowledge of Brahman. This knowledge of Brahman is imparted by a Sadguru. Hence Eknath says that the Guru gives Brahmatva to Brahman. Otherwise who cares for Brahman? Hence a Sadguru should be considered as superior to Brahman. Brahman is

Nirguna (without attributes) while a Sadguru is its Saguna form. The Nirguna Brahman prevades everywhere but it cannot cause cessation of pain or grant happiness to the human soul. To confer happiness after putting an end to pain or to grant merit after destroying all previous sins, is a thing which can be done by the Saguna form of Brahman alone. Hence the Nirguna Brahman incarnates itself in the Saguna form in various ages. Secondly the Saguna form cannot really be separated from the Nirguna and hence both the Nirguna and Saguna should be looked upon as same. It is a very great mistake to have a sense of superiority or inferiority between them. On the contrary Shri Eknath says that Saguna should be considered, if at all, superior to Nirguna as being more useful.

“He who considers Saguna as inferior to Nirguna is a perfect fool. Saguna and Nirguna are absolutely equal. There is not the least inferiority in Saguna, Ghee in its liquid state is no doubt ghee but when it becomes solid, it is better as it can be very easily swallowed. Similarly self-bliss can be quickly realized in the Saguna rather than the Nirguna Brahman.”

(Eknathi Bhagwata, Chapter XT).

The Saguna incarnations of Brahman like Rama, Krishna, and others have been there for certain purposes and for bringing about certain things. How can they be of use to all aspirants at all times ? Hence the Supreme Soul having incarnated itself in the form of a Sadguru meets the aspirant who is keenly desirous of obtaining grace. If the desire of an aspirant is really keen, the Supreme Soul arranges for his meeting with a Sadguru.

Many persons having such a keen desire have up to this time approached Shri Gajanan Maharaja and most of them have experienced the fulfilment of their desire. The words “most of them” have been used because I know of one or two persons who have remained unsatisfied. I, however, think that the following explanation would meet their case. The Shastras have mentioned three kinds of obstacles to the realization of self : (1) Old; (2) Present and (3) Future. In some cases there are obstacles running through various lives. Bharata, the son of Rishabhadeva, on account of whom India got its name of Bharatakhanda, had obstacles of the lives. (It must be remembered, by the way, that India does not owe its name of Bharatakhanda to Bharata, son of Shakuntala and Dushyanta, as some suppose.) He left off everything and went in a forest for practising penance. There he found a young one of a deer, helpless and without any one to protect it. He brought it up being actuated by a feeling of pity. But this feeling of pity was the cause of his having to go through two succeeding lives. Here it has been mentioned in the Bhagawata, that the feeling of pity is a fault or blemish in the case of a Saint. This is not necessary irreconcilable with the words of Shri Tukaram viz., “Pity for all creatures is the capital of a Saint.” The two sayings are from two different standpoints. The reason why the Bhagawata says that feeling of pity is a fault or defect is because a human being's pity is quite insufficient for removing the difficulties or pain under which the world is labouring. Besides when we feel pity for others, we assume superiority in ourselves and confer inferiority on other, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say that the word “Pity” implies pride. The proper feeling should be a feeling of service. This

great king Bharata, who had cast off all feelings of love towards his own wife, children and subjects and had gone to the forest, felt an infatuation for the fawn. His mind became engrossed in anxiety for the fawn, whether it would wander away, whether it would be killed or hurt by a dog, a jackal, a wolf or a tiger. When eating or drinking, when repeating his Japa or when practising meditation, Bharata was thinking of the fawn and thus his mind lost power of concentration and became unsteady and uneasy. That fawn, which had grown up, once ran away and did not return. Bharata became full of anxiety for it. At the same time the moment of his death approached and Bharata left his mortal body while his mind was engrossed in thoughts about that fawn. According to the rule viz., desires which are firmly rooted in the mind at the time of death determine the course of future life, Bharata was reborn as a deer. After that he was reborn as a Brahmin. Owing to the powers acquired by austerities practised in the previous birth, he could remember the incidents of his previous lives and in this last life he purposely assumed madness and became known as Jada Bharata.

When the King Rahugana was proceeding to the great sage Kapila for getting initiation from him, on the way this Jada Bharata, strong, well-built and looking like an idiot, was seen by the king's attendants who pressed him into the position of the bearer of the king's palanquin and the pole of the palanquin was placed upon his shoulder. In order to avoid treading upon ants and other insects on the path, Jada Bharata sometimes jumped from one side to another. The king could not bear the jottings thus caused and he angrily beat Jada Bharata with a cane. Jada Bharata instead of crying began to laugh. This raised doubts in the king's mind and having got down from the palanquin, he asked Jada Bharata as to who he was and why instead of crying he was laughing at being beaten. Jada Bharata then began to speak and having explained to the King the nature of the Supreme Soul, conferred his grace upon him and made him realize his Self. All this story has been very beautifully related in the fifth Skanda of the Bhagawata. What lesson are we to learn from this ? It is this that there are certain obstacles which prevent the attainment of the knowledge of self and until these obstacles are removed, there cannot be the rise of self-knowledge. It is said that in the case of Vamadeva there was an obstacle of one life. So those who are hampered by such unsurmountable obstacles, cannot be saved even by the greatest of Saints.

Now there is also another point worth consideration. Unless a Sadhaka meets his Niyata Guru (mentioned above), his real object cannot be achieved. In the story mentioned above, the King Rahugana had started with the object of going to Kapila, but as the time predetermined by destiny or his previous Karma arrived, he met Jada Bharata, who was Siddha from his birth, on the way and attained the object of his life. This shows that Jada Bharata was his Niyata Guru. It has been already said above that although Jnaneshwar and his brothers and sister were perfect Siddhas and had the power to uplift the world, still that power was of no use to Namadeva, whose Niyata Guru was Visoba Khechar. All this makes it clear that even though a Saint might possess the power of making others attain self-realization by a touch of the hand or by a glance of the eye or by mere words, still that power is not self-

dependent. The use of it depends upon the previous merit of the Sadhaka or the existence of some connection in previous lives. Bhasmasura got a boon from Shri Shankar that any person on whose head Bhasmasura would place his hand would be reduced to ashes and accordingly he created great havoc by exercising that power. Nala, the friend of Sugriva in the Ramayana, had been cursed by a sage and owing to that curse, if he placed any stone on water that stone did not sink but floated on the water. Shri Rama made use of this curse as if it were a boon at the time when a bridge was to be constructed to cross over to Lanka. The power mentioned in the above mentioned two instances was self-dependent i.e. it could be exercised independently of anything else. The power of Saints is not of this kind. If they had such a power, they would have led the whole world to Moksha, as they are full of compassion and cannot bear to see others unhappy. Vaman Pandit says in his Yathartha Deepika :

“If the knowledge of Brahman could be granted to persons who are not fit for it, then Saints who are full of compassion for all human beings, would have led all the three worlds to Moksha,” But such a thing is against the Divine Law. Hence if a particular person does not get any benefit from a particular Saint or if another does not attain self-realization even though he approaches a particular Saint, that does not in any way detract from the greatness of that Saint. In such cases we must satisfy ourselves with the reflection that that particular person might have no connection of previous lives with that particular Saint or that his proper time might not have then arrived.

Niyata Gurus of the type of the Nine Nathas are always expectantly waiting to meet their Niyata disciples. These Nine Nathas appear to be Chiranjiva (i.e. living till the end of the world), Machhindra Nath, Gorakha Nath, Gahini Nath and even Jnaneshwar are living now. Shri Dattatraya, the son of Atri and Anusaya, who is considered as the Guru of these Nine Nathas and Gurutwa has been handed down to him from Adinatha “Shri Shankar, is still living in his own original body. Other incarnations of the Divine manifested themselves for particular purposes and when those particular purposes were accomplished, they went back to their original home. But the incarnation of Shri Dattatreya is not of this sort. He would remain in the same form up to the end of the world. Hence this incarnation is called Avinasha Avatara (imperishable incarnation). Gopichand who flourished hundreds of years ago and even Sohiroba Nath who flourished about hundred and fifty years ago, both belonging to the Nath Pantha are reported to be still living in their original bodies. The various ways in which these Gurus of the Nath Sampradaya seek their disciples and lead them to perfection by conferring their grace upon them are beyond comprehension. In the life of Shri Gajanana Maharaja it has been mentioned that when very young he used to go to the deserted fort at Akola even at night and sit there in meditation. When Shivram Bhau Gupte remonstrated with him with him for doing so as it was dangerous, Gajanana Maharaja replied, “I do not go of my own accord. Some mysterious power takes me there and brings me back. So kind is my Sadguru.” The Saints, Sadgurus are thus secretly helping Sadhakas. They are called Invisible Helpers”. Sometimes they do not allow even their names to be known. Such

instances can be found in Shri Guru Charitra, Shivalilamrita, and other sacred literature. Some instances of this kind have been lately published in the Hindi "Kalyana" magazine of Gorakhpur. For receiving such mysterious help, the Sadhaka must possess the capital of great merit acquired in previous lives. A Sadhaka, therefore, should remember this and must always be intent on accumulating the capital of merit by leading a pure life and by regulating his conduct according to the rules laid down in sacred books. He should also approach Saints and Sadgurus with, proper submission and obtain their grace. Shri Ramavallabhadas says, "One should get initiation from a Sadguru and then through keeping company with Saints should get the principles taught by the Sadguru firmly fixed in the mind." It is not possible for every Sadhaka to remain in the company of his Sadguru for all time. Hence a Sadhaka should look upon all Saints as merely other forms of his own Sadguru and approach them with all humility and reverence. He must think that his own Sadguru is speaking through that Saint's mouth and leading him further on the right path.

The conversation between Shri Gajanana Maharaja and Shri Nana Saheb Gandekar Jahagirdar is very interesting in this connection. This Nana Saheb was the disciple of a Saint. After that Saint's demise, he went to another saint and began to practise meditation as told by the second Saint. Then he approached Shri Gajanana Maharaja, who having heard from him his previous history, pertinently asked, "To how many more Saints do you intended to approach after receiving grace from me?" Nanasaheb reply to that, "This would continue as long as my mind remains restless until everlasting peace is obtained." Later on, however, Nanasaheb obtained this peace of mind from Shri Gajanana Maharaja. The river joined the ocean and the process of flowing naturally stopped. Several persons have in this manner approached Shi Gajanana Maharaja and had their object fulfilled. Mr. Keshav Mahegaonkar, since deceased, was originally the disciple of some other Saint but he got complete satisfaction only from Shri Gajanana Maharaja. He then wrote a small book in Ovi called Metre called "Shri Gurushishya Vijnana Deepika", which was published by another disciple of Shri Gajanana Maharaja named Mr. Vishwanath Gopal Vaidya. This Mr. Vaidya is not merely a Vaidya (physician) by surname but he is a real physician and has published this book which would serve as a potent remedy for all those who are suffering in this worldly existence and want to free themselves from it and to attain liberation. The names of various friends who helped him in the publication of that book have been mentioned in the book itself. Mr. Vaidya himself has also written a small brochure in Ovi Metre called "Shri Guru Kripadhyaya". This pamphlet is a luscious fruit of the self-experience which he obtained as the result of the grace of his Sadguru. His own spiritual experiences are of a very high order and readers are recommended to read them carefully in the original. It was through this good soul, Mr. Vaidya, that I had the good fortune of meeting Shri Gajanana Maharaja and his many disciples and devotees and I am deeply thankful to him for being instrumental in making me render my humble service to the Great Master of writing this foreword.

Mr. Dattatraya Lakshman Nirokhekar, B.A., LL.B., retired Law-Lecturer, Police Training School, Nasik, who has compiled this book in simple and

graceful English, from sources supplied to him in Marathi, has conferred great obligations on the English-knowing world. He himself may not be even conscious of this but there is no doubt that he has done a great and noble work. He is a disciple of the well-known Saint, the late Shri Ramanand Bidkar Maharaja, through whose grace he has been progressing on the path of self-realization. But after coming to Nasik, he came in contact with Shri Gajanana Maharaja and at once recognised his greatness. He has compiled this book as a labour of love, in the firm faith that by doing so he is serving his own Sadguru. I, therefore, offer my congratulations to him.

The last message given by Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa to this disciple Shri Vivekananda was to spread the knowledge which he had obtained, in the Western Countries in which thousands of Shri Ramakrishna's disciples had been born and Vivekananda carried out the order of his Guru as being the main mission of his life. If we carefully ponder over this, we are driven to the conclusion that great men like Vivekananda and Ramatirtha felt an attraction towards the Western Countries and made those countries the sphere of their mission in life, simply because many Arya Souls must have been reborn in those countries. I think that the present work the life of Shri Gajanana Maharaja has come into existence for the sake of those human souls who have been reborn in the Western Countries, but were in their previous lives followers of the Nath Pantha. In the present day India, appreciators of this work may to a great extent be less in number, as I think that many non-Arya Souls originally from Western Countries have taken birth here. Many people say that Hindus and especially Brahmins have discarded their religion. I think that this statement contains a little bit of exaggeration. I, however, think that many Non-Arya Souls have been reborn in Brahmin families and naturally they follow their original tendencies. The Mahabharata says, "In Kali Yuga, Rakshasas take birth as Brahmins." This means Rakshasas take birth in Brahmin families and cause great trouble to the Brahmins. Hence those parents who wish that Non-Arya Souls, having no faith in God or religion, should not be born in their families, must keep their conduct scrupulously pure and must spend their lives in the service of God and His Saints. They must specially strive to obtain the grace of saints. Women should specially try to keep their moral conduct extremely pure and thus save their race from contamination and raise its reputation for moral height and upright instincts. If we look to the history of the families in which Saints like Jnaneshwar, Eknath, Ramdas or Tukaram or national heroes like the great Shivaji were born, we would find that great merit was being accumulated in those families in generation after generation. To entertain a desire that national heroes and saintly souls should be born in one's family is not beyond the sphere of a Sadhaka's duty. Such desires help the fulfilment of the Divine Will and hence the grace of God would be always showered on such a father or mother. Pitras (ancestors who are dwelling in the Pitri Loka) would be always entertaining good wishes towards them ; Saints would be always giving their blessings that such a race and family might continue till the end of the world and enjoy perfect happiness and peace. I conclude this foreword by quoting as Abhanga of Shri Namdeva containing these sentiments and dedicate these few lines written by me in the light of my poor knowledge, to the feet of Shri Gajanana Maharaja.

May all the races of the servants of Shri endure for ever till the end of the world. May the great federation of Saints always enjoy perfect happiness and may they never be disturbed by the rise of bad thoughts. May the faithful servants of Vishnu with their refined minds never feel the breeze of egoism. Nama says, "May all those whose mouths dwells the name of Panduranga, the inexhaustible treasure of all happiness, be ever happy."

SHRI GURU DEVA DATTA

Shri Samartha Sadan,)	(Sd.) R. K. KAMAT
Girgaum, Bombay)	Humble Servant
10 th October, 1940)	of the feet of all Saints

Chapter I

NATHA PANTHA

The present times may properly be described as the age of progress or the age of determination of truth. New discoveries are being made in every science. What is new to-day becomes antiquated tomorrow and the human intellect is trying to break all previous records and soar into regions of knowledge hitherto unknown. Modern intellectuals have as it were taken a vow to find out that one principle underlies all different sciences and their breaches. Books like *The Great Design* assure us that there is thread knitting together all sciences.

A thinker might say that all these are haphazard efforts to discover the one basic underlying Principle which is true, beautiful and beneficial and it is a question how far human intellect alone can proceed in this quest and whether it will ever be able to find out that one underlying Principle, knowledge of which would bring certain peace and happiness to all human beings.

Our Aryan culture, however, looks at this question from a peculiar standpoint of its own. Our prophets and seers say that human intellect alone will never be able to solve the riddle of the universe. The A. B. C. of this science can only be learnt in the school of internal intuition and the knowledge or realization of the human soul or, in other words, self-realization is the only link which unites all sciences and philosophies together. Differences and controversies will then vanish. The rise of Self-knowledge will dispel the darkness of Maya or illusion and the path leading to the highest truth will become distinctly visible. On this path peace and happiness are waiting to give a hearty welcome to the human soul.

Cast a glance at all the philosophical books in the world and you will find that it is only the philosophical and spiritual books of India that boldly call upon spiritual aspirants to come to them and proclaim that they would show them the path leading to peace and happiness. This is the call of the Nath Pantha to all human souls and the real power and greatness of this cult lies in this.

The origin of this Nath Pantha can be traced to Adinath i.e. Mahadev. Machhindranath was initiated into the path of self-realization by the great Adinath Himself. Hence Shri Machhindranath is considered as an incarnation of the first of the Nine Narayanas who are mentioned in the Bhagavata.

At the time of Shri Machhindranath all power in religious and social matters was centred in the hands of the followers of the Vedic religion. Sanatanis, who were followers of the ritualistic form of the Vedic religion, were to be seen everywhere. Temples and Maths were entirely under the control of their followers. They used to proclaim that they alone were fit to be the recipients of the highest knowledge and some of them were highly respected, in society as royal preceptorship and religious leadership was centred in them. The distinctions between men and men and between men and women

were very keenly observed. The caste system was very rigid. Only a Sanyasin was considered worthy of receiving spiritual knowledge. Hence knowledge regarding God fell to the lot of extremely few persons. Shudras and Atishudras were not allowed to enter the temples. A woman was considered as unworthy of being the recipient of Divine Knowledge.

All religion was considered to be centred in the strict performance of different kinds of rituals. Baths, Japa and penance were to the order of the day. The cult of Hatha-Yoga sprung from this tendency and ordinary people looked with great awe upon Hatha-Yogis as they were supposed to possess powers to reduce anyone to ashes by cursing him. This Hatha-Yoga Cult gave rise to various minor cults affording great opportunities to hypocritical self-centred individuals to enrich themselves. The Shakta and Bhairava Cults began to flourish. The figure of Shri Machhindranath stands out with a peculiar magnificence and greatness against the background of these social conditions.

Shri Machhindranath, through the power of his great personality, dispelled the dense clouds of ignorance and superstition. The divine lustre on his face and his persuasive and sweet tongue attracted the hearts of all. There were no restrictions in approaching him. Everyone who approached him was absolutely sure that Shri Machhindranath would show him the path of everlasting joy and happiness. What a shock was this to the Sanatanis followers of the path of rituals ! Their temples and Maths began to be less and less frequented.

The first doctrine that was preached by Shri Machhindranath was this ; "Everyone, whether a man or a woman and of whatever caste, had a birth-right to obtain knowledge regarding God." There was only one condition and that was that his Prajna (power of understanding) must be ripened. He used to preach that anyone who understood the instability of all worldly things and who therefore was convinced that realization of God was the only means of acquiring happiness, was one whose Prajna could be said to have been ripened. He used to proclaim loudly to all spiritual aspirants, "Oh ye restless human souls, come to me. I will give in your hands the key to everlasting happiness and will fix the seal of eternal joy on your hearts."

The great Nath did not give learned lectures on Vedanta nor did he ask people to read any religious books. He said to his disciples, "Observe very minutely how ideas arise in the mind. If you understand how and whence they arise you will be able to control them. When ideas are controlled, there will be rise of self realization."

The spiritual power of Shri Machhindranath was very great. He understood the minds of his disciples and gave impetus to their wills by his own spiritual power and placed them on the path of Light.

As soon as the disciple went to the Guru, he was taken under protection and was given internal sight and then in course of time he got self-realization and was submerged in the ocean of joy. Shri Machhindranath used to make his disciples sit near him and practise meditations. He removed all

obstacles to the progress on the path and having shown to the disciple different visions ultimately made him one with the Universal Brahman.

Shri Gorakhnath was the foremost of the disciples of Shri Machhindranath. Hundreds of anecdotes have been told regarding this pair of Guru and Shishya. Shri Gorakhnath initiated a peasant who later on became well known as Adbanganath. Shri Gorakhnath initiated also Gahininath, who in his turn became the Guru of Shri Nivrittinath, the Guru and elder brother of the great Saint of Maharashtra, Shri Jnaneshwar. This was how Nath Pantha became rooted in Maharashtra and spread its branches in different parts of it. Nivritti, Jnaneshwar, Eknath, and other shining lights of the cult spread their beneficent effulgence all over the land of Maharashtra and made it blessed. The mind itself loses in contemplation of the wide-spread influence of this Pantha and the far-reaching results achieved by it. It may be considered as a sign of the special Divine grace vouchsafed to Maharashtra that its land has been blessed with the sacred imprints of the feet of such great Saints and Yogis.

Such is the greatness and power of the Nath Pantha. What a succession of great personalities it gave rise to guide humanity in achieving the highest goal of life and in attaining the highest bliss. This tradition of great personalities will be carried on in future to the end of time and pilgrims on the spiritual path will continue to be guided by the cheerful rays of these shining lights. Blessed indeed are they who get initiation from such Sadgurus.

Shri Gajanana Maharaja is an adept in this Nath Pantha. Those who have been favoured with his grace know his greatness and they do not need any extraneous proofs to convince them of it. It is no wonder that they are full of gratefulness, to him. They have tasted the nectar-like fruit of spiritual joy.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOGA AND ITS DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

**WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DHYANA YOGA
AS TAUGHT BY SHRI GAJANANA MAHARAJA**

If we look to the original meaning of the word “Yoga”, it appears to mean the union of two similar things or ideas so that ultimately the two things or ideas merge into one another and become one. Thus Jiva (the human soul) and Shiva (the Supreme Soul) who appear to be separate in the dual state ultimately become one. But if Jiva is considered to be a part of Shiva, then how can the human soul and the Supreme Soul become one? To say so, would not stand the test of logic and reason. Yogis, however, have written down their experiences in the state of Samadhi in which the Jiva experiences that he is nothing but Shiva. The duality, therefore, is merely an appearance and not real. They have written down their experiences in order to help seekers of truth.

Yoga, however, is not to be taken to mean the experience of the unity of Jiva and Shiva but the path which leads to this experience. Hence Yoga may be defined as denoting all those actions, mental or physical, which have to be systematically performed in order to know the real internal Principle in man and then to experience it as nothing else but the supreme soul; in other words, to experience the unity between the human and the supreme souls. According to Vedanta, Chaitanya is the real nature of Jiva. The latter is not really fettered in any way but it falsely feels that it is fettered. If the soul had not been really free, Moksha would have been an impossibility. Hence Moksha is as it very nothing but its own traditional wealth kept as a deposit. Jiva is nothing but the Supreme Soul but owing to illusion created by Maya, he feels himself separate. When this illusion is dispelled by real knowledge, one gets the experience that Jiva and Shiva are really one.

The word Jnana or knowledge is used in two senses : (1) the knowledge of the true nature of things, and (2) the knowledge of the actions which are necessary to be done. The ultimate goal of all Yoga is to obtain the first kind of knowledge. The second kind of knowledge tells us what particular mental actions are required to be done in order to obtain the first kind of knowledge. To try to get a clear idea of what is Brahman and what is not Brahman, what is Atma and what is not Atma, then to concentrate one's mind entirely on the soul or Atma and to practise this concentration almost continuously until the aspirant becomes one with Brahman, are the actions meant. This being one with Brahman is known as Swarupa Jnana. That Mukti which is obtained by various Yoga practices but which falls short of Swarupa-Jnana is not real Mukti but what is known as Krama-Mukti i.e. merely a progressive stage of Mukti. It is also called Ishwara-Sayujya Mukti. In this stage the Sadhaka or aspirant gets help from Ishwara and ultimately obtains oneness, with Brahman.

But a human being is not endowed only with intellect. He has faith, devotion and he has also a body. Hence actions, some physical some mental, such as worshipping etc. have been prescribed. The body and mind are necessary in order to get experience in the world and these very experiences leave their deep-rooted impressions on the mind which then assume the form of desire and prevent the human soul from realising itself. Hence it is necessary in the first place to remove these obstacles. It is, therefore, incumbent to obtain control over the mind and breath by means of Yoga practices, because God will be realised only when the mind and the breath acquire steadiness. The acquisition of this steadiness is what is known as the state of Samadhi :

A person would be able to experience this state only, when all ideas and doubts would vanish owing to the mind and the breath being entirely controlled. A person can be said to have realised himself only when in the state of Samadhi the distinction between Jiva and Shiva vanishes and they become one. Till then the flow of ideas would continue and the perception of "I" and "you" would remain. Just as a pinch of salt, if thrown into water, soon loses its separate existence and becomes one with the water, similarly, in the state of Samadhi, the Jiva (human soul) loses itself and becomes one with Shiva (Supreme Soul). In the highest developed state of meditation there is no consciousness of space. There is a limitless ocean of light and there is complete quietude. This state has been described by various names. Some call it the state of unity between the Jiva and Shiva, some call it immortality, some call it the attainment of the highest goal, some call it the state of oneness, some call it the state of self-dependence (not depending upon anything else), some call it the state of absolute purity (Niranjanawastha), some call it Jivanmukti (state of Moksha while living in the body), some call it Sahajawastha (always being as we are i.e. one with the supreme soul) and some call it Turya i.e. the fourth state beyond the three states of waking, dreaming and sleeping. All these different names, however, point to the same meaning. It means the state in which the flow of ideas and desires is stopped, the mind goes beyond pleasure and pain, joy and sadness, and becomes entirely free from all passions. If a person attains this state while he is in this body, then after he leaves the body, he obtains oneness with the Supreme Soul which is known as Videha Kaiwalya Mukti.

In order to attain this state, four different paths of Yoga have been prescribed. They are:-

- (1) Mantra-Yoga ;
- (2) Hatha-Yoga ;
- (3) Laya-Yoga ;
- (4) Raja-Yoga. ;

Although the goal of all these paths is the same, still the methods followed in each of the paths are different.

You may go by any path but one thing must be firmly borne in mind, viz. that there can be no realization of Brahman unless the flow of ideas has

been stopped and control obtained over the breath, because all thoughts, doubts and desires arise from Chitta and Prana.

Eight different kinds of practices are there in the different kinds of Yoga but the goal of all is the same. This fact has been repeatedly mentioned here because otherwise it is likely to be lost sight of. The Samadhi attained in Mantra-Yoga is known as Mahabhava, that in Hatha-Yoga as Mahabodha, that in Laya-Yoga as Mahalaya and that in Raja-Yoga as Kaiwalya Mukti.

To awaken the Kundalini and, having thereby attained the state of Samadhi, to experience the unity between the Jiva and the Shiva, is the highest of all Yogas from the point of view of a Sadhaka. In Raja-Yoga predominance is given to Buddhi, in Mantra-Yoga it is given to worshipping and to repeating the mantra with firm faith and devotion, in Hatha-Yoga to certain external (physical) and internal (mental) actions, and in Laya-Yoga, which is a higher form of Hatha-Yoga, to Dharana and to the awakening of Kundalini. But these different kinds of Yoga are not absolutely independent of each other. In each kind of Yoga help is freely taken from methods of other Yoga paths.

There are certain things which a Sadhaka is required to do as a preparatory stage, in order to qualify himself for any kind of Yoga. They are called the eight branches or parts of Yoga. They are : - (1) Yama; (2) Niyama; (3) Asana; (4) Pranayama; (5) Pratyahara; (6) Dharana; (7) Dhyana and (8) Samadhi.

(1) Yama :- It includes morality, a regard for religion and a desire to observe these things in practice. We see many men glibly talking about morality. If, however, we would minutely observe their conduct, we would hardly be able to find one man in ten thousand who is absolutely of pure conduct. To have no evil thoughts regarding others' wives but to look upon them as mothers and sisters, to have absolutely no desire even to touch wealth belonging to others but to look upon it as upon one's own vomit, to feel others' pain as one's own, to feel pity for all creatures, to have a very soft and Compassionate heart, to lead a life of celibacy, Ahinsa (not to wound others in thought, word or deed), not to covet or take things belonging to others, to be always patient, forgiving, compassionate, straightforward, contented, and to have firm faith in religion and virtue, are the most important things included in Yama. These things are absolutely necessary for a Sadhaka who wishes to take up the practice of Yoga. He must have complete control over his mind, otherwise he will have a downfall. A man who cannot control his mind is not fit to enter the path of Yoga.

(2) Niyama:- This includes the observance of restriction in diet and movements. Food and drink must be taken in limited quantities and at settled times; a limited number of hours must be allotted for sleep, too much talking must be avoided. In short all these things must be done regularly and the mind should be strictly guarded from indulging in any excess. Purity of body by keeping it clean, and mental purity by Japa, worship, charity, penance and reading or hearing discourses, religious books and Shastras are also included in Niyama.

(3) Asana:- This means the practice of sitting comfortably in any one posture for a length of time. Padmasana, Sahajasana or Siddhasana may be chosen.

(4) Pranayama:- This includes three processes. To take in full breath is known as Puraka, then to keep it in for some time which is known as Kumbhaka and then to give it out completely which is known as Rechaka. These three things are to be done in a certain limit of time fixed for each. A Matra, is equal to a second and half. The Puraka must be done in four matras i.e. six seconds, the Kumbhaka in sixteen matras i.e. twenty-four seconds and the Rechaka in eight matras i.e. twelve seconds. Kumbhaka is of two kinds, internal and external. To keep in or retain the breath inside is known as internal Kumbhaka and not to take in breath after giving it out is known as external Kumbhaka. The limit of time mentioned above in respect of Puraka, Kumbhaka and Rechaka may be proportionately increased by practice. Pranayama, however, has importance only in Hatha-Yoga.

(5) Pratyahara:- This means to acquire steadiness of mind by controlling the senses in their natural attractions towards external objects. The mind is very fickle by nature. It as it were takes the external objects inside, through the senses and then becomes engrossed in the contemplation of these objects. Hence it is necessary to gradually draw the mind away from the contemplation of these external objects perceived by the senses and to fix it on some small point, and then to direct its attention towards the soul or self.

(6) Dharana:- This means to bring the form of a deity or the letters of a mantra before the mind's eye, to imagine that the form or letters are inscribed on one's heart and then to concentrate; on that form or those letters. This concentration must be practised for a period sufficiently long so that the form or the letters should clearly appear before the mind's eye as soon as attention is directed towards the heart. Then again there should be concentration on that form or those letters when they thus appear. Concentration on any centre (plexus) in the body according to the directions of one's-Guru is also known as Dharana.

(7) Dhyana:- To fix the mind on one thing, having obtained control over it by Pratyahara, and then to contemplate on that thing alone, to the exclusion of other ideas and conceptions, is known as Dhyana. In short it means remaining in the contemplation of one idea to the exclusion of all other ideas. In other words Dhyana is a sort of tendency acquired by the mind. It is a state in which the mind is continuously engaged in the contemplation of one thing, which may be either an object such as the form of a deity etc., or an abstract idea. This contemplation is always accompanied by consciousness of the self. Dhyana leads to the visualization of experiences. This visualization is of two kinds, (1) Saguna i.e. the visualization of the form of some deity, and (2) Nirguna i.e. the direct realization of the soul which takes the form of internal light.

(8) Samadhi:- In this state the mind becomes one with the soul in the same manner as salt is dissolved in water and becomes one with it. The state of complete Samadhi is known as “Parama Samvit” (i.e. consciousness of the Highest) or “Shuddha-Chaitanya” (i.e. pure consciousness). The words “union of the mind with the soul” cannot be appropriate in the description of that state. There are two kinds of Samadhis. One is called “Savikalpa” and the other “Nirvikalpa”. In “Savikalpa” Samadhi the meditator and the Subject of meditation are separate, only the meditator is conscious of nothing else than the subject of his meditation. In “Nirvikalpa” Samadhi, the meditator, the subject of meditation and the act of meditation become merged and what remains is nothing but pure Soul or Self, which is beyond the consciousness of the ego.

In books on Vedanta, three stages of “Savikalpa” Samadhi have been described. Although we have not got much to do with them, still to know them would be of some use in giving explanations from the point of view of the Shastras of the different stages experienced by a Sadhaka. They are ÷ (1) Ritambhara; (2) Prajnalika and (3) Prashanta Vahita.

In the first stage the mind experiences a sensation of great joy. It is the seer and sees itself separate from the subject of meditation. In the second stage, all coverings of ignorance vanish and there is realization of the knowledge of Brahman. In the third all other-ideas vanish and the self or soul is felt as nothing but Brahman,

Dhyana, Dharana and Savikalpa Samadhi, which have been described above, are many a time designated by the term “Samyama”. These are merely steps on the path leading to complete concentration of the mind. First control must be obtained over the body by means of Yama, Niyama and Asana, then over the breath by means of Pranayama and then over the senses with the help of all the four. When Dharana, Dhyana and Savikalpa Samadhi are added to the previous four things, the mind ceases to function and Buddhi alone continues to work. Owing to continuous practice, after some time the Yogi acquires a firm sense of detachment from the world and then his Buddhi also becomes merged and he attains self-realization. In that state the Jiva (human soul) becomes free from all dross, becomes full of knowledge and merges in the Supreme Soul or Brahman and becomes one with it just as salt is dissolved in water or as camphor is burnt away.

In the Nath Pantha, the well-known Nine Nathas were well-versed in all kinds of lores. It is needless to say that they knew Brahma-Vidya (the science leading to the realization of self). They also knew Astra-Vidya (the science or lore of missiles), Shastra-Vidya (the science of the use of weapons), Charms, the Vedas and their different branches, astrology, mantras, the Tantra Shastra, alchemy, and the science of medicine. They knew the four kinds of Yoga mentioned above, viz., (1) Mantra-Yoga; (2) Laya-Yoga; (3) Hatha-Yoga; and (4) Raja-Yoga. All arts and sciences were centred in them as they were the incarnations of Narayana, Their intellectual powers were extraordinary and their memory was wonderful. Once a thing was seen or heard, it was firmly registered in their memory. Owing to their extraordinary intellectual

powers, they completed the studies of all sciences in a period of twelve years and then practised penance for the next twelve years by maintaining themselves only on air. Owing to this penance their original studies became ripe and perfect and the presiding deities of all sciences Conferred their blessing upon them and they became famous and were revered everywhere like Gods. But as the Kali age advanced and disbelief and vice became rampant people lost their high intellectual powers owing to which it became difficult to master even one science completely. Even in these degenerate times occasionally a saint like Shri Gulabrao Maharaja, fully developed on all sides, shines forth and spreads the lustre of his greatness and compels admiration from all. There is no wonder then, that all sciences and arts were centred in the Nine Nathas who flourished more than a thousand years ago and who were supermen and incarnations of Narayana. Among the successors of these Nine Nathas, eighty-four attained the highest state of development in Yoga. Only the science of Yoga, however, continued to be studied and practised in the Nath cult among these successors. Every Yogi of the Nath Pantha completely knew Dhyana-Yoga or Raja-Yoga which is the most important of the Yogas but he also knew something about the other three kinds of Yoga. With the object that the disciples of Shri Gajanan Maharaja and other aspirants may gather some useful information regarding all the four kinds of Yoga, an attempt is made here to describe them in brief.

(1) Mantra-Yoga:- The main object in this Yoga is to bring under the control of the mind all things in the world having a name and form, by going through certain practices. All things in the world are capable of being understood by the mind (viz. sound, touch, form, taste and smell). The mind quickly becomes one with, what it sees i.e. it is carried away. This is what is known as the Vritti of the mind.

The mind is never free, even for a single moment, from ideas and sentiments. Whenever an action is done, it is the sentiment which determines its value as high or low, good or bad. That is why it is necessary to have our ideas or sentiments pure. Just as a man who has fallen on the ground takes support of the ground itself in order to rise, similarly in order to sever the bondage of the human soul, it is necessary to put oneself under certain restrictions and bondages. The mind becomes unsettled through name and form and it is therefore through name and form that it must be brought to steadiness.

In Mantra-Yoga a Sadhaka is asked to meditate upon some object having a name and form, care being taken that the object is such as to give rise to pure ideas and sentiments. This is known as meditation on the Saguna form (made of the five elements), of deities. In addition to this the Sadhaka has to observe six out of the eight Sadhanas, viz. (1) Yama ; (2) Niyama; (3) Asana; (4) Pranayama; (5) Pratyahara ; and (6) Dharana. Besides he is asked to observe certain rules of conduct and he has to perform the worship of the deity. An idol, a Linga, a Shaligrama stone, a picture, mural markings or diagrams are the objects of worship and meditation. Some "Mudra" is to be practised i.e. the Sadhaka is asked to fix his eyesight in a particular manner and there are also some "Nyasas" i.e. the Sadhaka has to touch certain parts of his body such as the heart etc., while repeating certain letters of the mantra

given to him. The Sadhaka has to repeat the mantra side by side while worshipping or mediating upon the idol etc. This in due course leads to Samadhi which is known as Mahabhava Samadhi. This Yoga is easier than other three. In this Yoga attention is required to be paid to different forms of worship, to the different duties prescribed to be observed by the Sadhakas according to his Varna and Ashrama and to the peculiar rituals which have to be performed in every family tradition. The duties of men are different from those of women. A Mantra which can be given to a man cannot be given to a woman. There are different mantras for Brahmins and Shudras.

(2) Hatha-Yoga:- In this Yoga main efforts are directed towards bringing the physical body under control. But as the physical body is very closely linked with the astral body, if the physical body is controlled it inevitably leads to the gaining of some control over sentiments, desires and reason; because the physical body has been so constructed that it is a proper abode for experiencing the fruits of actions done in previous births which the astral body brings with it. Hence when the astral and the physical bodies join together, there is no doubt that they are interdependent on each other and hence efforts directed towards the physical body have an effect over the astral body. When, therefore, the physical body is brought under control by certain practices, the astral body can also be more easily brought under control by certain mental practices. To bring merely the physical body under control is not Yoga although it may be useful in keeping the health fit. All the different eight branches of Yoga i.e. Yama, Niyama etc. have to be practised in Hatha-Yoga. Meditation is, however, practised upon light or upon the flame of a lamp. The Samadhi in Hatha-Yoga is known as Maha-Bodha Samadhi. Steadiness of mind is acquired by means of Pranayama. The word "Hatha" consists of two syllables, viz. "Ha" and "Tha". They respectively mean the Sun and the Moon or the Prana Vayu and the Apana Vayu. The Prana Vayu which abides in the heart is always drawing towards it the Apana abiding in the Muladhara, while the Apana is similarly drawing Prana towards itself. These two Vayus, therefore, are as it were fighting with each other and obstructing each other in leaving the body. When, however, they become friendly with each other, they help in leaving the body. These two Vayus become one in the Sushumna nerve. The Prana which is in the individual body is merely a part of the Universal Prana. Hence efforts must first be directed towards bringing about the union between the individual Prana and the Universal Prana. This leads to perfect health and brings about steadiness of mind and concentration.

Pranayama has been given great predominance in Hatha-Yoga. The other three Yogas viz Mantra, Laya and Raja Yogas, it is secondary importance. To take the Prana upwards to the Braharandhra (the centre of the brain) through the Sushumna and to experience the state of Samadhi there is considered as Moksha by Hatha-Yogis.

In acquiring control over the physical body certain practices have to be done. They include restrictions regarding the place of abode, eating, drinking, sleeping, sitting and sexual intercourse.

All the practices which are required to be done in Hatha-Yoga have been divided into seven categories : (1) Sharir-Shodhana i.e. purification of the body. This is done by means of purifying practices known by the names of Dhauti (Washing the stomach by a piece of cloth), Basti (Cleaning colon by drawing in water), Nawali (Rolling the intestines from right to left), Kapalabhati (Breathing like bellows), Neti (Cleaning the nostril by strings etc.) and Trataka (Steadfast and concentrated gaze). (2) Dhriti i.e. strength of mind. This is acquired by Asana. (3) Steadiness which is acquired by different Mudras (fixing the eyesight on certain points). (4) Dhairya i.e. fortitude which is acquired by means of controlling of the senses (5) Lightness which is acquired by Pranayama. (6) Experience or visualization which is acquired by means of meditation. (7) A sense of detachment which is acquired by means of Samadhi.

He who is suffering from any of the three root causes of all diseases viz. Kapha, Vata, Pitta, should first practise the other six purifying actions and then begin Pranayama. He who is free from any such disease may begin Pranayama at once. These are preliminary stages of Hatha-Yoga. Owing to these the veins, arteries and nerves become pure or clean and digestive power is increased, which helps a good deal in the practice of Kumbhaka. The body acquire steadiness by the practice of some Asana. Siddhasana is very useful in the awakening of the Kundalini. It also helps in obtaining the Unmani State and in the practice of the three Bandhas viz, Mula, Uddiyana and Jalandhara. (These are different postures taken when sitting in meditation). It has been said above that steadiness is acquired by Asana. It is, however, more easily acquired by means of the practice of certain Mudras (certain ways of fixing the eyesight). Besides the practice of Mudras is the real key to the awakening of the Kundalini. The purification of the body reacts on the mind which then ceases to indulge in ideas and doubts and the body and the mind become as it were one and work harmoniously. The Yogi then gets various Siddhis or powers. Different powers are acquired by the practice of different Mudras. There are six centres-(plexuses) in the body, close to the spinal chord, which are known by the names (1) Muladhara; (2) Swadhishtana (3) Manipura ; (4) Anahata; (5) Vishuddha and (6) Ajna. If a Sadhaka meditates on each of the centres with the letters "Ham" and "Sah", Kundalini becomes awake. Owing to the internal repetition of "Ham" heat is generated which produces an effect upon the Kundalini and the repetition of "Sah" causes a similar effect upon willpower. The Jivana Vayu (i.e. the breath necessary for life) in Muladhar has got the elements of the Sun and the Moon in it and the internal repetition of "Ham Sah" awakens the Kundalini. "Ham" awakens it and "Sah" takes it up to the Sahasradala (the plexus at the centre of the brain).

Owing to this the Sadhaka feels that he has become all powerful. He feels that the Jiva and Shiva have become one, becomes entirely concentrated and enjoys great bliss.

In describing Pranayama above, it has been said that one-should practise Puraka, Kumbhaka and Rechaka but nothing is stated there through what particular "Nadi" these should be practised. In the spinal chord there are three "Nadis". (1) Ida Nadi which represents the moon; (2) Pingala Nadi which

represents sun; and (3) Sushumna Nadi which is between the first two and which is the real staircase as it were of ascending to the Brahmarandhra. Ida is to the left and Pingala to the right side of Sushumna. Ida starts from the left side of the genital organ (Anda-Kosha) and having passed the centres (plexuses) by the left and right side alternately, comes up to the back of the neck and by the side of the brain it comes into the left nostril. Similarly Pingala starts from the right side of the Anda-Kosha and comes into the right nostril. Whenever Kundalini is awakened by any means, it goes up to the Brahmarandhra through the Sushumna, having crossed the six plexuses. In Hatha-Yoga, the utmost goal is to awaken the Kundalini and to take it up to the Brahmarandhra and to make it steady there. When breath is controlled by means of Kumbhaka, Kundalini is awakened by the internal repetition of "Ham Sah" and it goes up through the Sushumna. Once the path of the Sushumna is opened, the Yogi can at will keep the Kundalini up in the Sahasradala or bring it downwards. The Yogi then does not breathe through the Ida and Pingala but does so through the Sushumna alone. These three Nadis join together in the Ajna Chakra and thence Sushumna alone proceeds to the Sahasradala.

(3) Laya-Yoga:- This Yoga is only a higher stage of Hatha-Yoga. This Yoga is to be practised after the practices of (1) Yama; (2) Niyama ; (3) Asana ; (4) Pranayama ; (5) Pratyahara ; (6) Dharama; and (7) Dhyana are completed. In every human being there always dwells the One Existent, Living and Blissful Shiva and His Consort Shakti. But owing to the net of desires accumulated in innumerable births which envelops this pure being, the human soul is not conscious of its own real nature. In Laya-Yoga the Yogi first obtains control over his mind and then he gets the power of matter merged into the power of the soul and the five elements in the human body then become united with the five elements in the universe. It is a well-established principle in all Yoga philosophy that whatever is found in the Universe is also to be found in the human body.

Just as certain actions have to be done in the Mantra and Hatha Yogas for helping the Sadhaka in his progress, similarly certain actions have to be done in this Yoga also. In Laya-Yoga the extremely minute nature of the organs of knowledge, their position in the body, the effects which they produce on the astral body, their powers and the inner world which is in the human body are all taken into consideration. Different deities dwell in the different plexuses in the body. The Sahasradala is the place of Shiva, Supreme Soul, who is self-existent, life and bliss, and of his Shakti, and the Muladhara is the place of the Kundalini, which is the power of Prakriti. The goal of this Yoga is to obtain control over this Prakriti and to get it merged in the power of the soul and thus to attain the state of Samadhi.

Just as in Hatha-Yoga the state of Samadhi is attained by meditation upon light and in Mantra-Yoga by meditation upon some object having a name and a form, similarly in Laya-Yoga, Samadhi is attained by meditating upon the reflection of the Kundalini in the form of light which appears at the centre between the eye-brows. This reflection appears only after Kundalini is awakened.

In this Yoga, Kundalini is awakened by taking the help of Hatha-Yoga and of the general eight branches of Yoga viz. Yama, Niyama etc. Predominance, however, is given in this Yoga to Dharana. Just as the Infinite Shesha has supported the whole universe upon His head, similarly the Kundalini power holds and supports the human body. Besides the Kundalini is the main support of all the practices in Yoga. Just as we open a door by opening the lock, similarly a Yogi awakens the Kundalini by certain practices and thereby opens the door of Moksha. In the human body the highest power is represented by the Kundalini. In this power all other powers are centred. If strict celibacy is observed, this power instead of producing matter and thereby degrading itself, produces "Ojas" (subtle vital power) which ascends along with the power of breath, to the abode of Shiva and Shakti situated in Sahasradala. A person who succeeds in obtaining complete control over sexual enjoyment becomes free from all bondage.

The Kundalini is in the form of a serpent and having coiled itself is sleeping in the Muladhara. The opening of the Sushumna has been, closed by the mouth of the Kundalini. All the seventy two thousand Nadis of the human body start from this very place. Kundalini is also called Prana Shakti (the power of breath) and Shabda-Brahman (Brahman manifested in the form of sound). All mantras are but the manifestations of the Kundalini and hence the Kundalini is considered as the presiding deity of all mantras.

He who thoroughly knows this Kundalini or Prana Shakti and brings it under his control is a real Yogi and such a Yogi alone can attain Moksha. All others have been tied and caught in the snares of this world for ages together. The Kundalini shines like lightning. Mantras are groups of letters and hence the sounds of mantras are but manifested forms of the Kundalini. Even the Supreme Soul as observed in the Dwaita or dual state is a manifestation of the Kundalini. Hence the repetition of mantras is necessary in order to awaken the Kundalini. The essence of Mantras is full of life. Mere letters are dull matter but the power centred in them is vital and full of life. Although this divine power dwells in every human being, still in order that it should produce an appreciable effect in the physical world, it is necessary to tread the path indicated by a Sadguru and to carry out his instructions. When the capability of a Sadhaka is joined with the inherent power of a mantra, then only the spiritual power of the soul becomes manifest.

Although this Kundalini has its abode at the Muladhara Chakra in every human being, still it throws light on all lores and makes them manifest in the heart of a Yogi alone and the Kundalini of a Yogi alone then as it were dances with joy. The vedas, mantras, the sun, the moon and the fire are nothing but the manifestations of this Kundalini power. The Kundalini is the mother of the whole universe. All the six plexuses and the Sahasradala are tricks performed by this conjurer. It may be considered as the universal soul or Shiva Himself. Hence the main point is to awaken it by the repetition of mantras, to take it tip to the Brahmarandhra and to unite it with the power of the Supreme Soul there. When this Kundalini merges into the power of the Supreme Soul, there is real self-realization. Hence awakening of the Kundalini is the first stage and

then taking it upwards and uniting it with the Sahasradala is the next stage which means complete self-realization.

(4) Raja-Yoga:- Raja-Yoga stands supreme among all the Yogas. In the other three Yogas viz. the Mantra, Hatha and Laya, the Sadhaka gradually acquires purity of mind and becomes worthy of attaining the state of Savikalpa Samadhi. It is only in Raja-Yoga that he attains the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. A Yogi who has attained Savikalpa Samadhi but has not experienced the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi has to be born again and again in this world. In the Nirvikalpa Samadhi which is attained only by means of Raja-Yoga all desire is absolutely rooted out and the Yogi feels himself completely detached from the world and hence he does not come back when he becomes one with Brahman. The first three Yogas prepare the ground for Raja-Yoga. Maha Bhava is attained by means of the Samadhi in Mantra-Yoga. In Hatha-Yoga the Sadhaka gets complete control over breath and goes into the state of Samadhi. He becomes as it were dead to all-external objects. In the Samadhi of Mantra-Yoga the Sadhaka is unconscious of the external world and experiences a feeling of joy. But the real perfect Samadhi is that which is attained in Raja-Yoga. There is only the consciousness of the Divine Existence in that state and the Sadhaka then attains complete Mukti or Liberation.

Vairagya (Detachment) is of four kinds, viz. (1) Mild i.e. there is absence of attachment towards things of the world off and on ; (2) Middling i.e. there is a desire to enjoy worldly pleasures if they are available but the desire is not keen enough to produce any unpleasant feeling if they are not available ; (3) Adhimatra i.e. a sense of disgust of worldly pleasures is produced owing to experiences of such worldly pleasures often resulting in misery ; and (4) Para i.e. there is a complete turning away from the world and objects in it. In the Mantra, Hatha and Laya Yogas only the, first kind of Vairagya viz. mild, is necessary. It is only in Raja-Yoga that the Sadhaka must have complete or Para Vairagya. Although in (every kind of Yoga great emphasis is laid on the preparation of the mind, still it is in Raja-Yoga alone that this preparation of the mind is considered as the only essential thing.

To ascertain and know clearly what the truth is and what is not, what the soul is and what is the non-soul, what is eternal and what is non-eternal, by reasoning and by the thoughtful and close study of the Shastras, the Vedas, the Upanishads and works of philosophy, then to realise that God is self-existent, that He is Life and that He is Bliss and then to go into the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi and to become one with God or the Supreme Soul, is in short the aim of Raja-Yoga.

In Raja-Yoga alone all the results of actions done in former births are nullified, Karma really comes to an end and the Yogi attains complete Mukti even though he may be living in this world in the human form.

Note :- The information regarding Yoga given above is based upon the information given by Shri Gajanan Maharaja on the subject at different times in his talks, supplemented by information

gathered from different books dealing with the different systems of Yoga. The description given above is not complete in all details, the main object being to give the reader a general idea of the subject.

DHYANA-YOGA

AS TAUGHT BY GAJANANA MAHARAJA

Although during the last thousand years or so the human mind has been in a state of degradation, still at least one man in a thousand could be found, who tried to obtain some knowledge, superficial though it may be, of Yoga. Perhaps one man among ten thousands actually practised Yoga. Such men, however, who practise Yoga, generally only practise certain postures (Asanas) and breath control (Pranayama). They do not observe "Yama" and "Niyama". Perhaps one man in a million goes through the different stages of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara and Meditation on some object. This state of things demonstrates the truth of Shri Krishna's words in the Geeta, "Among thousands of men perhaps one makes any efforts to accomplish Yoga."

Although Shri Gajanana Maharaja's Guru had said to him that he would be able to guide aspirants on the spiritual path, still as Gajanana Maharaja has not had the benefit of education and has not studied the Vedic literature or Smritis, he has certain fixed standards of his own by which to judge the aptitude of any person who goes to him. If an aspirant has the following qualities in him viz. (1) good moral character; (2) respect for social ties; (3) a sort of disgust of the worldly life and its ways; (4) faith; (5) devotion and (6) belief in God, he blesses him by giving him the Ajapa-japa of "Soham" which Gajanana Maharaja himself had got from his Sadguru and the great Shri Machhindranath himself. By his internal power of vision Gajanana Maharaja can know whether particular aspirant has practised certain branches of Yoga in this or in his former life. Having thus understood that particular aspirant's aptitude and progress, he guides him accordingly. As this Soham Mantra is the mantra of all the Nine Nathas and as it is also the mantra signifying the action of breathing of all creatures, an aspirant who takes to it is sure to make some progress in this very birth and to get experiences showing his progress.

Gajanana Maharaja takes the responsibility on his own shoulders of seeing that his disciples make some progress. Nowadays there are many so-called Gurus giving some mantra to others and there are thousands who receive such mantras and become their disciples. Such persons, however, have no real desire to get Moksha. They are more or less bent upon obtaining worldly pleasures. Occasionally perhaps one among a thousand is a real aspirant. But it would be difficult to find that a mantra given by a Guru whose mission in life is to obtain money from his disciples rather than to guide them on the spiritual path leading ultimately to real peace of mind has contributed towards at least the purification of the disciple's mind. There have been hundreds of cases where persons, being deceived by external appearances and worldly erudition, have continuously kept going to a Guru for years together and have made absolutely no progress from a spiritual point of view.

A Guru who really takes care to see whether the disciple is spiritually progressing is very rare. An aspirant's progress can be ascertained by marking whether there has been any change in the tendency of his mind since his receiving initiation from a Guru. If he finds that his mind is gaining in calmness and its attraction respecting external things is becoming less and less, he can be sure that he is progressing.

Shri Gajanana Maharaja is altogether different from such worldly Gurus as are described above. This fact would be abundantly clear from the sketch of his life given hereinafter. It is, therefore, not necessary to dilate upon that point here. It will not be, however, out of place here to give in short his teachings in respect of Dhyana-Yoga.

Though it is not necessary in Dhyana-Yoga, as it is in Hatha-Yoga, to do certain bodily and mental actions in order to obtain control over the mind, still if a person tries to concentrate his mind on any centres in the body with the aid of the "Soham" mantra, he very soon succeeds in acquiring concentration. In Hatha-Yoga control is obtained first over the breath by Pranayama and then control over the mind becomes easy. In Dhyana-Yoga mind becomes concentrated by means of the Japa and then control over the breath follows automatically. In Hatha-Yoga, one has first to do "Pooraka" (taking in full breath) and then "Kumbhaka" (keeping in of the breath), while in Dhyana-Yoga owing to the concentration of the mind "Kumbhaka" results without the necessity of "Pooraka". This "Kumbhaka" is known as "Kevala Kumbhaka". In that state of deep concentration, the action of breathing is there but it is very minute. It is so minute and imperceptible that if a piece of cotton is held close to the nostrils no motion can be perceived. That means that there is the action of breathing only sufficient to carry on the functions of the living body but otherwise there is "Kumbhaka". Thus one important stage of Hatha-Yoga is naturally acquired in Dhyana-Yoga without any special efforts directed towards it. The most important thing in Yoga, however, is to awaken the "Kundalini" (serpent power) which is really the Prana-Shakti and having opened the entrance to the Sushumna Nerve, take in and give out breath through the Sushumna. In order to achieve this, a Sadhaka is advised to practise meditation by sitting in, the Padmasana or Sahajasana posture. The posture taken should be such that one can sit in it for some time keeping the body in a straight line without feeling any uneasiness in any part of the body. Gajanana Maharaja is not keen on any particular Asana. When, however a Sadhaka is not practising meditation but merely repeating the Soham Japa, he may sit in any manner or even lie down at ease. The main object of repeating the Japa is to get the habit of concentration and to be able to remain in that state continuously. This helps the Sadhaka a good deal in obtaining the stage of Samadhi without making strenuous efforts. The concentration of the mind leads automatically to the control of breath. The Sadhaka can take up any easy posture and try to concentrate on any part, of the body, which does not mean any part of the physical body but any of the internal centres or plexuses. Dhyana-Yoga thus makes use of the six centres mentioned in Hatha-Yoga as Shat-Chakras. They are as under : (1) Muladhar situated near the anus ; (2) Swadhishtana situated near the genital organ ; (3) Manipura situated near the navel ; (4) Anahata situated near the heart ; (5)

Vishuddha situated near the throat ; and (6) Ajna situated near the centre between the eye-brows. Then there is the Sahasradala situated at the centre of the brain.

Gajanana Maharaja tells the disciple to concentrate on any of these six centres and to repeat the mantra "Soham" without using his tongue but merely in his mind. Owing to the internal repetition of the mantra and the accompanying concentration on any of the six centres, there is natural control of breath. This causes vibrations in the region of the "Kundalini" which is then awakened and the entrance to the Sushumna becomes open. The breath then goes up through the Sushumna. The mind and the breath then become united and begin to work in harmony and the Sadhaka then easily succeeds in fixing his mind anywhere he likes.

It has been mentioned above that Shri Gajanana Maharaja confers his grace upon a disciple, having first ascertained through internal vision his previous progress either in this or his past life. Hence it happens that the disciple gets the experience of self (i.e., turning of the mind inwards and consequent turning away of mind from external worldly objects) sooner or later according to his previous progress. Thus some disciples have obtained that stage in a week, some in a fortnight some in a month, some in six months, some in a year and some at the latest in six years. They then see the light inside.

Some people might ask the question, "What is this light in side?" and might say that anything can be brought before the mind by imagination. The answer to this question and objection is very clear and obvious to those who have that self-experience. There is a vast difference between imagining light and bringing it before the mind on the one hand and actually internally seeing light and different forms of light on the other. This light is not merely imagined but actually seen; only it cannot be said to be seen by the physical eye. When the mind becomes concentrated and devoid of thoughts of external objects, this light begins to shine everywhere, inside and outside. This light is, therefore, not in imagination but it is the light of the soul. Some might say that owing to the control of breath there is tension on the nerves of the brain and thereby heat is generated and the natural result of heat is light. The answer to that is as under :-

"When a Sadhaka turns his mind away from all external objects and fixes it inside and remains quiet and at ease, where is the tension on the brain-nerves which would lead to the generation of heat? This Sadhaka has not practised control of breath so as to cause tension on the brain-nerves. Concentration of mind naturally leads to control over breath and hence there cannot be any tension on the nerves. Besides there are some Sadhakas who see this light always, even when they are not sitting in meditation. It is dancing before their eyes even when they are talking with others or eating or laughing. In such a case there can be no question of tension on the nerves of the brain.

The Upanishad says, "The Soul or Self should be seen, heard, thought over and lastly constantly meditated upon." This sight of the Soul can be only

in the form of light. The Soul is not a concrete external object so that it can be shown or seen in any other manner. The Soul is light. When the mind becomes concentrated on this light, further progress is very easy and quick.

A disciple of Shri Gajanana Maharaja first of all gets the Darshana of this light and this is in accordance with what is told in the Upanishad. If a Sadhaka says that he is meditating upon the Soul, an objector might say that the soul being formless and devoid of attributes, there is nothing to meditate upon and the mind requires some object on which to concentrate. The answer to this objection is that the mind concentrates upon this light, which is not merely imagined but is actually seen and it can be seen only when the Sadhaka gets the power of internal vision.

When the entrance to the Sushumna becomes open and the mind and the breath can ascend and descend through the Sushumna the Sadhaka can see various sights in the universe. He can experience various smells, he can hear various sounds. He can see various visions of forests, rivers the sea, ships and aircraft, the sun the moon, the stars, and can get the Darshana of various Deities, Saints, and Rishis. He can get various powers known as Siddhis such as (1) leaving one's body and entering some one else's body; (2) walking over-water; (3) moving through the sky; (4) perceiving treasures buried deep underground etc. He can remain for days together without any sensation of hunger or thirst.

It has been said in Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika that a Sadhaka gets certain experiences when he concentrates upon certain centres i.e. certain experiences are particularly associated with certain centres. But it is the experience of the fifty and odd disciples of Shri Gajanana Maharaja that they get any experience at any centre on which they happen to concentrate. There have been even instances, in which some disciples have got various experiences, merely by-repeating "Soham" mentally with great intensity, without concentrating on any of the centre.

Shri Sadguru Gajanana Maharaja tells his disciples to repeat the Japa of "Soham". This is known as "Ajapa-Japa" and its element is Vayu or air. Food, water, light and air are things which are extremely useful to life. Out of these the first three are not in our control i.e. we may or may not get them whenever we want. Air alone is independent of the other three and we can get it freely and as much as we like. This element of Vayu is very important as the other three viz. food, water and light are produced from it. Any action, therefore, which is in consonance with the Ajapa, is in complete harmony with a great force in nature.

Now let us see the real significance of "Soham". All creatures are taking in and giving out breath. The number of breaths in the whole day amounts to twenty-one thousand and six hundred. The taking in of the breath generates the sound "So" and the-giving out generates the sound of "Ham". Thus the sound of "Soham" is being continuously generated in every creature, although-very few are conscious of it. To be conscious of this sound is the real "Sudarshana" of "Soham", which means "I am He". "Soham", therefore, is

the sign showing the oneness of Jiva (human soul) and Shiva (Supreme Soul). All knowledge has been centred in "Soham". All the four Vedas, the Geeta and the Gayatri Mantra tell us nothing except "Soham". One can accomplish anything by meditating upon "Soham". Disgust of sexual pleasures, the ending of all Karma, release from the cycle of birth and death, the realization of self- in short everything can be obtained through "Soham". This is the real Dhyana-Yoga or Raja-Yoga.

Shree Gajanana Maharaja first finds out the internal aptitude of his disciples and then having entered into their Buddhi (consciousness) gives an impetus to it. He then tells him the Japa of Soham and places the disciple on the path of Dhyana-Yoga. In Dhyana (meditation) the external world disappears and the Sadhaka enters into the internal world which is inside himself. According to each disciple's efforts in practising Dhyana, he becomes easily accomplished in all the eight branches of Yoga in more or less time. All his disciples will testify to the truth of this assertion. But if he finds that a disciple had already practised the different eight branches of Yoga in his previous births, he does not ask that disciple to practise them again. In the case of those disciples, who in their previous births had practised some of these eight branches, some remaining unpractised, the mere intense practice of Dhyana-Yoga suffices and they easily and naturally acquire efficiency in the remaining branches without making any conscious efforts and without following any outward external observances.

There is no general rule that Shri Gajanana Maharaja would confer his grace upon a disciple in a particular manner. It all depends upon the disciple's aptitude at the time when the grace is conferred, Sadguru Gajanana Maharaja grants internal vision to the disciple and takes him to the Sahasradala (the thousand-petalled lotus at the centre of the brain) through the Sushumna nerve. This is a very difficult path. The disciple must be always under the protection of his Guru. Even if the Sadguru places the disciple on the path of light, still to reach the goal is a very difficult task. There occur various obstacles to the practice of meditation, which are the result of actions done in previous births. The mind sometimes loses concentration and becomes unsteady. All obstacles, however, are removed if the disciple has firm faith in his Guru. Although the real nature of Jiva (human soul) is "Chaitanya", still in order to realise it, guidance from a Sadguru is absolutely necessary.

The progress of the disciples of Shri Gajanana Maharaja is extremely satisfactory and it is their experience that all obstacles to their practice have been quickly removed by his grace.

The spiritual experiences of the various disciples of Shri Gajanana Maharaja differ. This is due to the differences in mental aptitude, intellect and practice already done in previous births. Some are going by the path known as 'Vihangama Marga' (birds path i.e. beginning from the Dwidala at the centre between the eye-brows), some by 'Pipilika Marga' (the ants' path i.e. going through all the plexuses beginning with the Muladhar at the anus), some by 'Meena Marga' (the path of the fish i.e. considering oneself as a fish swimming in the water of Brahman), some by 'Kapi Marga' (the Monkeys' Path, i.e. jumping from one plexus to another and not necessarily in sequence

and some by 'Shesha Marga' (the snakes' path, i.e. gliding directly into the supreme soul by catching hold of the intervening state between the setting of one idea and the rising of another). They get experience first and then begin to understand by what path they are going. They first of all get Atma-Pratiti (realization or experience in themselves), then they tally it with Guru-Pratiti and then see what is written in the Upanishads, the Yoga Shashtra of Patanjali and the works of Saints. These disciples have written down their various experiences in their own words which have been given in this book. Now let us look to the varieties in the experiences of the various disciples.

If a disciple had practised all the eight branches of Yoga his previous birth, Shri Gajanana Maharaja directly leads him self-realization. There is no necessity for that disciple to again practise the eight different branches of Yoga.

He tells some to repeat continuously "Soham". While this Japa is going on, if the mind becomes concentrated on any (plexus), the disciple gets internal vision and spiritual experiences not necessarily associated with that centre. This is not exactly according to the Shastras. It is written in Yoga-Pradipa that only particular experiences are got when there is concentration on particular centres. The methods of Shri Gajanana Maharaja are indeed peculiarly his own. When the disciple gets internal vision, he sees some of the lotuses which are on the path of the Sushumna and the deities there. As long as the lotuses are moving the petals cannot be counted. When they become steady, then meditation becomes ripe. The disciple can see the letters of the mantra at each of the centres clearly. He, however, is not made to stop there but he is taken to the Brahmarandhra and there he remains steady and enjoys bliss, just as a kite after going high in the sky becomes steady there. The disciple, when he comes back to ordinary consciousness, gives a description of the bliss he enjoyed in meditation. The Sadguru then tells him, "Where Light and Sound become one there is real Self. There is nothing more to be seen or told. Then consciousness of "I am Brahman" also vanishes and only Bliss, pure and simple, remains."

Some disciples become merged merely in "Soham" and enjoy bliss. Some have entered the Nirguna State, getting the Darshana of various saints on the way. Some first saw simply dense darkness and then the divine light. This light takes various forms. Some see first clusters of pearls, some creepers, some a snake, some a swan, some a disc, some a staff, some the orb of the sun and some a peacock. Some merely see different kinds of colours. The disciple can ascertain the degree of his progress according to the intensity of the light. The Gayatri Mantra itself merely describes meditation upon this divine light.

Some disciples along with these sights also hear different kinds of sounds. This internal sound is known as Anahata Dhvani (i.e. sound which is not produced by the striking of one thing on another but is self-existent). Sounds like those of thunder, beating on the tabor, dance, conch, the flowing of a river, falling of the rain, croaking of frogs, playing on the guitar or humming of bee are heard by some. There is no rule that a particular disciple

would hear a particular sound. It can only be said that a Sadhaka generally hears any of these sounds when in a state of meditation. This hearing of sounds may be considered as a state in the Sadhaka's progress. Ultimately the sound of "Soham" is distinctly heard.

The visions that are seen internally, may look like dreams, but these are made of light while figures appearing in a dream are not so. God is Light and this light which is internally seen merely exemplifies the truth of the verse in the Bhagawad-Geeta (XV, 15) which says, "I dwell in the heart of all."

In course of time, as the Sadhaka proceeds further on the path, the three things viz., the knower, the knowable and the act of knowing or the meditator, the subject of meditation and the act of meditating, become merged together and the Sadhaka becomes one with Self. This is the true object of meditation. All saints serve and worship this Self'. There is Upasana until this stage is reached. Beyond that there is nothing but oneness.

When the power of breath gets an upward turn, the breath proceeds upwards through Sushumna and enters the Dwidala (two-petalled lotus) at the centre between the eyebrows where the Sadhaka gets the Darshana of his Sadguru, and of other perfect saints and thence the breath proceeds to Brahmarandhra at the centre of the brain. The "Soham" consciousness then merges in the unknowable Supreme Soul and the Sadhaka attains perfection.

Some of the disciples of Gajanana Maharaja have attained the stage of Sahaja Samadhi and are enjoying the bliss of self even though engaged in worldly activities. Some are approaching that stage. In the case of some, visions have disappeared and they are trying by practice to get a hold on the basic principles (i.e. Brahman) behind all these visions. Some perform mental worship in the state of meditation and enjoy the happiness of Saguna forms of the Divine. Some have obtained self-realization illustrating the truth of Shri Tukaram's saying, "In this very body and with these very eyes I shall see the exquisite bliss of Moksha."

We must explain here what we mean by "Sahaja Samadhi" in order that we may not be misunderstood. By "Sahaja Samadhi" we do not mean that state which is known as "Sahajawastha" or "Jivanmukhi", typically exemplified in the lives of King Janaka, Shri Rama and Shri Krishna. This "Sahajawastha" is the perfection of Yoga. In that state there is no going into the state of Samadhi and coming out of it. It is a state of Samadhi all along continuously. External actions are performed automatically or it might be said that others think that these personages are performing worldly actions. The personages themselves are all along enjoying the bliss of self, their ego is merged in the Supreme Brahman, and the worldly actions are performed merely by their Indriyas or organs. All the great and well-known Saints had reached this state. Shri Jnaneshwar propounding the Geeta, Shri Eknath leading the life of a Grihastha, Shri Ramdas giving advice to Shri Shivaji Maharaja for the uplift of Maharashtra, and Shri Tukaram going to the Vari of Pandharpur, had all reached this state. What we mean by "Sahaja Samadhi", however, is this. The disciple, while doing worldly actions, suddenly and without any effort on his part, is unwittingly attracted by the light which flashes

before him and goes into a state of Samadhi when he becomes unconscious of his body and external surroundings ; or the "Soham" Japa automatically begins and he becomes merged in his self and for a time becomes unconscious of everything else. Of course this state does not last for a long time. He again comes back to normal consciousness. Some disciples go into this state many times every day. Thus we have used the word, "Sahaja" to indicate that the Samadhi is not the result of any deliberate attempt at concentration or meditation by the disciple but that it is unwittingly attained without any conscious effort on his part.

We may remark here that we do not wish to exaggerate matters for the purpose of extolling the powers of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. We have taken scrupulous care not to overstate things, on the contrary in many places we might be guilty of understating. It is a special characteristic of Shri Gajanana Maharaja that he has favoured his disciples by initiating them in Dhyana which is really the seventh stage in Yoga and made them blessed.

He says :- "My brothers and sisters, I am merely a traveller on the path of the light of "Soham" and a disciple of my Sadguru, who am still a student learning Saguna Dhyana. Having experienced certain things myself I tell the things to you through the grace of my Divine Sadguru. Awaken and kindle the flame of "Soham" in this dense darkness of ignorance, practise Dhyana Yoga and obtain Self-realization. Your whole worldly existence will be full of bliss. Great spiritual powers will be generated in you and no evil-minded person would ever dare to cast an evil eye towards you. When your meditation would attain intensity friends and foes alike would begin to behave like brothers and sisters towards you. You may then carry on your ordinary social and worldly life. You will be happy spiritually as well as in your worldly life. This is what is meant by attaining spiritual greatness while at the same time leading a worldly life. This is the real grace of Guru, which is the same as the grace of our real Self. Knowledge of spiritual things does not conduce to weakness of mind. It teaches how to give a blow for a blow but with the proper mental attitude. Instead of merely saying that all these spiritual things are false and chimerical, people should first try to get actual experience and then call these things false if they find them so."

Gajanana Maharaja, whenever he initiates any disciple, makes the disciple practise meditation in his presence for an hour or so every morning and evening and when he finds that the disciple has fairly started on the path, he orders him to carry on further practice in the disciple's own house. Hence one will never find a crowd of devotees and admirers near Maharaja. There is no pomp of flowers, prasada, worship, purana or katha, nor are there discussions on Vedanta going on. He never says to any one, "You will get a son, you will get a good service, you will be rich, you will soon be a judge or soon be cured of your disease." Saints, owing to their power of internal vision, can know a person's destiny, the tendency of his actions in this birth and the good or evil things which are to befall him in this life. If they would begin to predict the future, thousands of worshippers would crowd around them, hanging on their words. People would be flocking to them actuated by self-interest. But this is not the real mission of Saints in this world. Their only

mission is to guide aspirants on-the spiritual path. The aspirant should get initiation from a Sadguru, practise meditation quietly according to instructions and make his life blessed. This is the real goal of human life. If any saint thinks he has a special mission, he may make use of his internal power of vision, predict future and collect a crowd of disciples. Shri Gajanana Maharaja has nothing to say against it.

One would never find more than four or five persons near Gajanana Maharaja at any time. Wherever he goes he acts in the same way. Hence many aspirants are misled into thinking that he is an ordinary man and not a saint. Gajanana Maharaja always says, "If you want to attain the goal of human life and therefore want to put your faith in some saint, remember that if that saint shows you the path of self-experience, then only you should put your faith in him. If, however, you put your faith in a saint on account of the miracles performed or reported to be performed by him, you may perhaps obtain the fulfilment of some of your worldly desires but you will never thereby attain the real aim of human life. I am absolutely sure that saints can never change anyone's fate. Whatever is fated to happen is sure to happen. Do we not see hundreds of people rolling in wealth, who have never gone to a saint or never even remembered God ? They are enjoying the blessings of wealth and progeny according to their actions in previous births. If this is true then why should saints profess to change anybody's fate? Take this torch of "Soham" to light you through the dense darkness of ignorance and having safely crossed the ocean of worldly existence, remain in the world in a spirit of detachment. This torch will lead you safe to your destination and once you reach there, you will be merged in your real self and be full of bliss and joy. I am showing you the path leading to the Infinite and if you follow it you are sure to realise the real nature of Brahman. While you are practising Dhyana Yoga with intensity, evil-minded persons will not dare to cast their evil glances towards you. I do not ask you to put your faith in me but I earnestly ask you to put your faith in the "Soham" Mantra and in your self-experience. Try to get self-experience and be assured that the whole world will appear to you as nothing else but Brahman, if you practise Dhyana Yoga with intensity. Even though you may be in the world, you will be as it were out of it and you will be beyond pleasure and pain and the equanimity of your mind will never be disturbed. All your bodily diseases will disappear of their own accord, When you realise Brahman, the stage of a Sadhaka is over. After that you may remain in the world enjoying the full bliss of self-realization, a devotee in the real sense of the word of the all pervading Omnipotence. It has been said, "One can really worship God only after becoming one with Him."

Really Gajanana Maharaja is a wonderful saint. He has realised the self but is still an obscure individual. He passed nearly 20 or 25 years at Akola in the Berars, where only four or five persons understood him. He then spent 16 to 17 years in Bombay in the same manner, very few having any idea of his greatness. Although at present he is known better, still the number of persons having an idea of his real greatness is very small indeed. His manner of living is so simple and unassuming that unless one is told that he is a saint, it is not possible to get an idea of his greatness or saintliness. He has absolutely rooted out egoism and prefers to remain unknown.

Such saints who have attained self-realization are very rare in these days, and, if at all there are any, they are not to be found everywhere. This great saint has placed his disciples on the path of Dhyana Yoga and having shown to them the flame of the light of the soul has led them to self-realization. Readers are earnestly requested to peruse carefully the experience of these disciples given in this book and we are sure that the perusal will convince them of the truth of the observations made above. If these experiences are compared with what is written in "Soleeva Sukha" of Shri Samarth Ramdas, Swami, "Prakasha Deepika", "Goraksha Gita," and various poems and songs of saints like Jnanadeva, Tukaram, Eknath, Janabai, Kabir and others on the same point, we shall clearly see that they run on the same line and there would be no doubt left in our minds that the Dhyana Yoga as taught by Shri Gajanana Maharaja was also the path by which all great saints of old, attained self-realization. A few quotations are given below from the poems and songs of some great saints of the past in order merely to point out how similar the experiences of Shri Gajanana Maharaja's disciples are to those briefly described by the various saints in their poems and songs. The rendering into English of these songs and poems is free and not literal.

(1) "What is the use of saying much? The source of all things should be sought for only in this. A spark of the size of "masura" pulse is seen. All the three worlds are centred in it. Forms of Shiva and Vishnu appear and disappear in this spark. Tukaram says; This is the source of all. One should always see this pure self."

TUKARAMA.

(2) "He who has seen in truth the lustrous Eye, has seen the real Eye of the ordinary eye. There is the splendour of blue light. A brilliant light is seen in the flame. This is the real seed of Brahman. If a man has not obtained it, he will never get real peace of mind. What is the use of merely reading books?"

HAIBATI.

(3) "The flame of light has flashed. That is the real key given by Sadguru. The light is Omnipresent. It is present, among people as well as in deserted forests. It is inside oneself as well as outside. The mind is extremely delighted when it sees this internal moonlight. Dasa says: It is a sign of Shri Guru's pleasure and grace that my eyes have been filled with this light of various colours."

RAMDAS.

(4) "The seed was sown by Sadguru in the ear and the crop began to grow in the eyes in the form of light. The breath and mind were made one and I became as it were mad with joy."

MAHIPATI

(5) "The torch of knowledge has been ignited but there is no soot of thought in it. I have turned this torch round the shining Datta with great joy and love. All distinctions have vanished and all passions have disappeared. Eknath has obtained the grace of Shri Janardan and has got merged in this divine light."

EKNATH

(6) "In the midst of it, there is a flame of fire, very small and going up, shining like a streak of lightning in a black cloud. It is very minute, yellowish in colour and shining. The supreme soul is seated in the centre of this minute flame."

NARAYANOPANISHAD

(7) "The great all-powerful Being is the originator of all things that exist. He is the lord of all and is an imperishable flame of light."

SHWETASHWATAROPANISHAD.

(8) "A light, clean and soft, brilliant and clear, resembling the interior of the sky is seen. My darkness has been dispelled. All things have become one. Limitless dense blue light pervades everywhere. He alone would obtain this who has been fully graced by Sadguru. Through the grace of my Sadguru Shri Nivritti, I have been able to know this. I cannot even say I know it because I have become one with it,"

JNANESHWAR .

(9) "Listen to the cause of this. First of all there appears dense darkness. This is undoubtedly the Prakriti of eight kinds"

EKNATH

(10) "First there is red light, above that there is white in the middle there is light of a darkish colour. In the blue light self is centred."

JANABAI.

(11) "He who can see pearls of exquisite lustre, with shining light all round, has obtained the real thing."

JNANESHWAR.

(12) "In the first stage of Samadhi, light in the form of snake is seen, in which there are different kinds of discs. Rubies and shining jewels are seen. These are manifestations of the eternal one. There is also seen the light of the rising of the moon in the second phase."

JANARDAN SWAMI.

(13) "There are flashes of lightning having the colour of gold. Various kinds of flames arise. Do not be afraid."

RAMDAS.

(14) "The light like that of the Sun is clearly seen. Similarly, things which are invisible are made visible. Look upon all those sights as but the manifestations of the one self. Peacocks with their plumage raised up, all blue in colour are seen dancing."

MERU SWAMI

15) "All these minute lights are but the manifestations of Brahman. Eyes must be steadily fixed on them. When they meet at the centre between the eyebrows, then they appear before the eyes in a steady position."

EKNATH.

(16) "The mind has lost itself in the Unmani (i.e. absorbed) state. There is no consciousness that I was ever fettered. Aims and objects have vanished. Word has been silenced. Having looked at my own self, I am now absolutely steady. How can I describe that Bliss? It is beyond words."

JNANESHWAR.

(17) "That soul which dwells in all things in the form of light is actually seen by us through the grace of our Guru."

NIVRUTTI

(18) "As long as the internal light of the soul is not seen, everything else is useless. This light shines day and night pearl of pure lustre. This flame requires no oil and no wick and it is never extinguished. It is there in the waking as well as the sleeping state. Kabir says : In every house people are merely reading religious books but no one has obtained the sight of this divine light."

KABIR.

(19) "White light all round and a blue light in the centre This is the real Rama of Kabir." KABIR.

(20) "Oh Saints, in the house of Sadguru there is great fun. There are flashes of lightning in the absence of clouds. Red lights seen and showers of pearls are there."

TIKAMDAS

(21) "Do not be afraid of this worldly existence. You are mistaking a rope for a snake. There is really no difference between Jiva and Shiva. But you must not extinguish the internal lamp of knowledge. Sohira says : That flame of light is always shining. There is no night and no day in its case. Do not move your eyelids without being conscious of it."

SOHIROBANATH.

Chapter III

LIFE SKETCH OF SHRI GAJANANA MAHARAJA

“He should be called a Saint who has known God, and who has definitely ascertained what is Eternal and what is Non-Eternal.” RAMDAS

(1) Parentage and Residence:- The subject of this brief biography, Shri Gajanana Maharaja, belongs to the class of such great personalities. Such wonderful and super-human personalities are born and not made. If the incidents in the life of Shri Gajanana Maharaja are minutely observed, one is compelled to exclaim, “How all things came about by a wonderful combination of circumstances; verily, the Divine will is wonderful and unfathomable.”

The worldly name of Shri Sadguru Gajanana Maharaja is Gajanan Murlidhar Gupte. His father, Murlidhar Bajirao Gupte, was originally a resident of Pen in the district of Kolaba. His family were the Inamdars of Pen, Vasi and some six or seven more villages. But owing to some adversities sent by fate, Murlidharpanth left Pen and went to the Berars in 1851 for seeking some service. He obtained Government service at Malkapur (a Taluka place) in the district of Buldhana. He, however, found that the emoluments were too meagre to enable him to meet his expenses and to lead a life of comfort and ease. He, therefore, read Law side by side and succeeded in passing with credit the pleader's examination which was then taken in Marathi.

(2) Family:- He then left off service and began to practise as a pleader at Yeotmal. At that time there were only two or three other pleaders there. He very soon made good progress in his profession and became well known as a successful and rising pleader. His wife's name was Rajubai. This couple gave birth to eight children – five sons and three daughters. The eldest son's name was Narayana and the second son's Ramchandra, the third was named Keshav, the fourth Lakshmana and the fifth, the youngest child, was named Gajanana.

The eldest son, Narayan, was born at Malkapur in 1868. From his childhood, his great intellectual capacity and righteousness of conduct could be noticed. His Marathi studies were completed at Amraoti. He used to get a scholarship there. This Narayan is the intellectual and learned poet of Maharashtra known by the name “Bee”. He dislikes celebrity. Lovers of poetry will never forget the collection of his poems published under the title “Fulanchi Onjal” (a handful of flowers). His poems are an exquisite expression in words of Beauty as he has perceived it in a mental trance like state when the mind is absolutely pure. The “Kesari” of Poona has likened this wonderful weaver of words to a flower Oudumbar Tree, a pithy way of describing his rare qualities as a poet.

This Narayanrao entered Government service as a clerk, and after several transfer's to different places, at last he came to Akola. Some time later he became a Naib Tahasildar there and in that capacity was transferred to

Murtizapur. Again he came back to Akola and remained there till he retired on a pension.

Rambhau, the second son of Murlidhar pant, got employment in the firm of Ralli Brothers.

Keshwavrao, the third son, was adopted by his uncle.

Lakshmanrao, the fourth son, after completing his studies, got an employment at Akola.

Shri Gajanana Maharaja, the fifth son and the last child of Murlidhar pant was born at Yeotmal in 1892. In the third year of his age, he got a very strong attack of small-pox, owing to which his right foot became permanently crippled. He was taken to Amraoti and was examined and treated by various doctors but all the remedies were of no avail. He has remained a cripple throughout his life. This caused great sorrow to the parents of Shri Gajanana Maharaja.

(3) Death of Gajanana's Parents :- Both of them fell ill some time later and died within a month or two of each other. At the time of her death the mother of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, Rajubai called her sister Balubai near her and having placed Gajanana's hand in hers, said, "I shall shortly cease to be a denizen of the world. My Gajanana is a cripple, as you see. Be a mother to him Love and cherish him deep and bring him up in such a way that he would never even remember me. If ever you happen to meet a Saint, place my Gajanana on his feet. By the blessings and grace a Saint, Gajanana's life will be happy and blessed."

(4) Aunt:- This aunt of Gajanana, Balubai, was a widow since her childhood and having no other real relatives, was staying with her sister. All the members of Gajanana's family had feeling of affection for her. She, to the last, never slackened in her care of Gajanana and as soon as an opportunity occurred as desired by Gajanana's mother in her last moments, this aunt did not fail to take advantage of it and to carry but the last wishes of her departed sister.

The death of the parents of Gajanana within a few days each other was a very serious calamity. The responsibility of the whole family then fell upon Mr. Narayanrao, the eldest brother, and upon the aunt, Balubai. But it appeared that God Himself had taken the family under His special protection and slowly light began to be seen in the grim darkness of adversity and the three sisters were married one by one and left for their husbands' houses. Gajanana's Thread-Ceremony also was celebrated at the age of nine. This event occurred in 1901.

(5) Visit to a Saint :- At this time Rambhau, the second brother, who was in the service of Ralli Brothers at Chikhli, Dist Buldana (C. P.), wrote a letter to Akola regarding Shri Narayan Saraswati Maharaja, asking Narayanrao to go to Chikhli with whole family, Narayanrao accordingly

obtained leave for two months and went to Chikhli with all the members of the family. At about a distance of six or seven miles from Chikhli, there is a village called Antri, near which there are many hills and dense thickets of trees. In this forest near the village of Jambore, there is a Samadhi and some underground cellars. A well-known Yogi, named Shri Narayan Saraswati Maharaja lived there. His name had spread far and wide then and devotees from Punjab, Delhi and Bengal used to visit the place for the Darshan of that Great Yogi.

Gajanana was at that time about ten or eleven years old. The whole family went to Antri from Chikhli in bullock carts.

(6) Shree Narayan Saraswati :- The place of residence of Shri Narayan Saraswati was very charming. Just nearby was a big square, in the centre of which there was a Samadhi of a Saint of great antiquity. On the four sides of the square there were apartments and there were some underground cellars built of bricks and mortar. The apartments were well lighted and contained seating accommodation for ten or fifteen persons. In the thicket of trees near the square, there was a beautiful well of tasteful and wholesome water. People performed their Sandhya adorations and their Japa near it and also took their food there. On an ota near the Samadhi there was spread a bed on which Shri Narayan Saraswati usually sat.

(7) Form of Worship at Jambore :- Early in the morning there was Kakad Arati (turning round of the ghee-lamp), at noon worship and Arati, in the evening again Arati and after Arati there was Bhajan (chanting of devotional songs).

The Gupte family went immediately on their arrival for the Darshan of Maharaja who assigned to them an apartment for putting up.

The aunt independently went for the Darshan of Maharaja, taking Gajanana with her. Gajanana immediately firmly caught hold of the feet of Maharaja. The aunt offered her prayer to Maharaja saying, "Oh Maharaja, take pity on this crippled child. He has neither father nor mother to take care of him. How would he fare in future life? Except the Almighty God, there is no one to support him. You are a great Saint and have become one with God. You possess all the powers of the Almighty God. Kindly take this child under your protection." She further said, "My sister who was this boy's mother, was a pure and noble woman. Just before her death she entrusted this child to me and asked me to place him on the holy feet of some Saint, saying that only by the grace of a Saint his life would be blessed and happy. The present occasion has been brought about only by her good wishes."

(8) Blessings from Shree Narayan Saraswati :- Maharaja appeared to be pleased at these words of the aunt. He turned towards her and said, "Mother, both of you sisters had practised Yoga in your former birth and the present occasion has been brought about by the great merit acquired in the previous birth. This Gajanana was a Yogi in his former birth. After some years he will become well-known as a Saint and will be a guiding light to many

aspirants on the spiritual path. From the pupils of his eyes I can see that he is a Yogi of Nath Pantha. Do not be anxious about him at all. But mother, (Maharaja later on used to say to the aunt that she was Muktabai) you are not destined to hear about his full wide-spread fame. When you will come to hear even a part of his-growing fame, naturally your anxiety regarding him will disappear.”

Maharaja then asked all to go and cook their food. After taking their food, all went to sleep. It had been agreed that at 4 a. m., all were to attend the Kakad Arati. All were awakened in due time and went to attend the Arati. Only Gajanana appeared to be sleepy and he remained sitting on his bed in a state of half sleep and half wakefulness and he was found so sitting when the others returned. When all others had left for the Arati and Gajanana was sitting on his bed in a semi-conscious state with his-eyes open, he saw the following vision.

(9) Spiritual Vision:- There was dense darkness everywhere and Gajanana found himself walking on foot in the darkness. Occasionally he saw a star shining and again there was darkness. Rain began to pour down, sounds of thunder were continuously heard and there were intermittent, flashes of lightning. The way was full of serpents, some black, some white, some with cowrie-like marks. Some were of the thickness of a man's wrist while others were as thick as a man's thigh. The serpents entwined themselves round Gajanana's feet and waist. The largest among them encircled Gajanana's neck and got upon his head. Gajanana was observing this and still walking on. While walking his body became that of a stout and strong man and he was going ahead pushing all the serpents aside. He was feeling a mixed sensation of fear and joy. He could not get any idea as to what distance he had travelled. Then he began to feel lightness in his body. The serpents, however, were still there. But the darkness disappeared and there was a clear light spreading on all sides. In the light Gajanana saw in front of him a beautiful Samadhi adorned with various kinds of flowers giving out fragrant smells. There was a small ghee-lamp lighted and camphor was burning on one side. A beautiful damsel was standing near the Samadhi. She had a gold waist-band, from which a shining sword was hanging. As Gajanana was about to bow down to her, she became invisible. Gajanana was surprised as well as delighted. He felt a curiosity to know what Saint's Samadhi it was and felt a keen desire to get the Darshan of that Saint. Next moment the Samadhi broke in twain and a grand personage of dazzling appearance came out. There was a big sound of “Adesha Om Hansah Soham Brahma.” Gajanana felt as if that very sound was coming out of his own body. At the sight of that grand personage, having a long beard, wearing a saffron robe, having garlands of Rudraksha beads round his neck and with a crown of matted hair on his head, Gajanana's eyes were dazzled and he felt that the sound of “Hansah Soham” was issuing out of his own mouth just as it was coming out of the mouth of that personage. Then the form of that personage assumed a mild “appearance, there was a sound of “Machhinder Adesha” and the whole scene vanished.

(10) After the Vision:- Gajanana then became fully awake and sat upon his bed. His body had become wet, even his clothes were wet and a sweet fragrance was coming out of all the parts of his body. He was rubbing his eyes. Although the sun had arisen a long time previously, still he was feeling a great darkness before his eyes and hence he was a little bit frightened.

Looking to his wet body, Gajanana as well as others thought that Gajanana in his sleep had upset with his foot the pot of water which was near his bed. Seeing "Gajanana's terrified condition, the aunt's mind became full of fear and anxiety and she took Gajanana and placed him on the feet of Maharaja who turned towards the aunt and said, "Have you understood? He is a real Yogi. You need not be anxious about him."

He then asked Gajanana to repeat the Mantra which had been given to him in his dream. That Mantra was reverberating in the ears and the whole body of Gajanana. He had heard the words, "Adesha Om Hansah Soham." Out of these words the previous words had stopped and only 'Soham', 'Soham' was going on continuously in his ears and body. Gajanana, therefore, repeated only "Soham". Maharaja then said, "Even at such an early stage, you got the Darshan of the Goddess and of Machhinder Nath, Is it not so ?

(11) Forebodings:- Gajanana then described the whole vision to Maharaja, who appeared, to be highly pleased at hearing it. He caressed Gajanana and kissed him and uttered the following prophetic words as if casually, "Oh Gajanana, you will become famous in the world and many aspirants on the spiritual path will be benefited by you and you will always experience great joy and peace of mind;" After bestowing the blessing Maharaja further said, "I shall always manifest myself to you in your breath."

After this all took the Darshan of Maharaja and returned to their place. Food was then cooked and all took their meals.

(12) A Tiger Visiting the Samadhi :- One day when all the members of the Gupte family had been for the Darshan of Maharaja, he said that a big tiger daily came for the Darshan of the Samadhi in the square and therefore no one should keep awake after 11 p.m., lest he might be terrified by the tiger.

That night others slept as usual, only Gajanana lay down pretending sleep. His Japa was going on and his mind was full of joy. In the meanwhile, the tiger as usual came there, took the Darshan of the Samadhi and of Maharaja and went away by the way it had come Maharaja casually cast his eyes at Gajanana and finding him awake, said, "Child, are you still awake ? Were you not afraid?" Gajanana replied, "I was awake, still by the grace of Sadguru I did not feel the least sense of fear."

In the morning all others came to know about the incident at flight. Every one then said to Maharaja, "If Gajanana was awake, why were we also

not awakened?" To this Maharaja replied, "Because you would have been frightened."

(13) Visit to Borgaon: Guru of Shree Narayan Saraswati:- Some time later the day of the anniversary of Maharaja's Guru arrived. The Samadhi of his Guru is situated at Borgaon, which can be reached from Antri in about six or seven days by a journey in a bullock-cart. Borgaon (known as Baba Maganache Borgaon) is in the Nizam's Dominions situated at a distance of about forty miles to the north of Aurangabad and the road to it passes through jungles and is very difficult. By this road Shri Narayan Saraswati started with about two or three hundred disciples and about one hundred and fifty bullock-carts. They reached the place on the seventh day. Borgaon is a small village. Maharaja was well-known in those parts. All persons took the Darshan of the Samadhi. They stopped there for fifteen days. Every day there were Bhajan, Worship, Arati and Processions. Dinners on a large scale were also given.

(14) Guru's Holy Message to His Disciples:- There is a river near Borgaon. Maharaja pointed out the spot where his Guru used to sit for meditation. One day, while there, Maharaja narrated the account of his Guru to the following effect:-

"My original name was Parmananda and my Sadguru's name was Narayan Saraswati. When my Sadguru knew that the time of his departure from this world was approaching, he called me near him as I was under his special favour and said, "Parmananda, I am soon going to depart from this world. The tradition of my path must be continued as before. I do not see any one more fitted for the task than yourself. Leave therefore, your name of Parmananda and assume my name of Narayan Saraswati and carry on the tradition. Do not initiate any one who is not a sincere aspirant and who has not trained himself in self-control. If you initiate a person and he later on acts thoughtlessly, withdraw your power from him." Soon after this my Sadguru left his mortal coil.

(15) Robbers on the Way:- After the celebration of the anniversary was over Maharaja returned to Antri with all the persons who had accompanied him to Borgaon. On the way in the jungle they had to pass by a camp of robbers, who were then taking their food and shouting and laughing among themselves. The robbers had guns, similarly the persons accompanying Maharaja also had some guns with them. People asked permission of Maharaja to fire but Maharaja did not allow it. After they had proceeded a mile further, however, people did fire blank ammunition, which terrified the robbers and made them keep quiet.

(16) Shree Narayan Saraswati as seen by his Disciples: Shri Narayan Saraswati (Paramananda) was a Saint of great powers. Many miracles performed by him were witnessed by Gajanana and his other devotees. He never allowed any one to take his likeness in a photograph. One Mr. Pendharkar, a drawing-master at Akola (Berar) and a photographer, had tried to take the photo of Maharaja for about a hundred times but had failed in getting a likeness. Then he fell at the feet of Maharaja and prayed earnestly

that Maharaja might be gracious enough to allow his likeness to be taken. Maharaja then consented and he succeeded in getting a likeness.

This fact was narrated lately by Mr. Pendharkar's wife, who had come for Shri Gajanana Maharaja's Darshan in July 1940. Her husband died about six months ago. Many devotees of Maharaja once earnestly prayed to him to allow himself to be photographed. They begged earnestly for the favour, particularly urging that devotees stopping at a distance would thereby get something like his Darshan and would be able to worship his image. When his earnest prayer was offered, then Maharaja willingly allowed himself to be photographed.

If any of his devotees felt a keen desire to see him, Maharaja used to manifest himself before him and ask, "Why have you invoked me?" Owing to such miracles his disciples were extremely delighted. While he was at Antri or Jambore, thousands of pilgrims came for his Darshan. To some he appeared to be sitting on a tree, to others he appeared sitting in meditation on the brink of a well. To some he appeared young, to others old. Sometimes he appeared jumping from one tree to another, sometimes weak and sometimes stout and strong. His form thus appeared changing. He, however, told his disciples that such miracles happen naturally in the case of Yogis. Undue importance should not be attached to them.

Shri Narayan Saraswati (Paramananda) left this world in November 1910 on Kartika Vadya Dwadashi. His age was then one hundred and twenty-seven. His birth place was Daithana on the banks of the Godavari at a distance of about 40 miles from Paithana. The traditional trade of his family was that of a shroff. His father died when Paramananda was very young. He was then brought up by his mother, and his thread ceremony was celebrated by her. When Paramananda was twelve years old, his mother also died and he took the bones of his mother's body after it was burnt, to Nasik in order to throw them into the Ramakunda there. He never returned home but from Nasik went to the Punjab, learnt the Grurumukhi Language and remained there for a very long time.

The information given above about Shri Narayan Saraswati was supplied to us; only a few days ago by one of his disciples who is at present very old. He has also given us a list of the various-places where Shri Narayan Saraswati stopped from time to time and the approximate number of years that he passed at these various places.

The whole covers a period of about 114 years. The list has been given below :-

- 12 years : Childhood at Daithana
- 16 years : In the Punjab. Some of these years were passed at Hyderabad (Deccan) with Raja Raya Rayachand Daphtardar.
- 6 years : In pilgrimages to the four Dhamas.

7 years : Karat Wadi.
½ year : Netansha.
6 years : Jafferabad.
6 years : Varud.
4 years : Sategaon Savangi.
7 years : Kasba Khed.
1 year : Amasari.
7 years : Jalgaon.
12 years : Palaskhed
13 years : Berale.
3½ years : Ambashi.
13 years : Antri.

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Total 114 years

(17) Return of the Family to Akola:- Gajanana, his brothers, aunt and others stopped for some days at Antri and then having taken leave of Maharaja, returned to Rambhau's place at Chikhli. Having stopped there for about three or four days, Gajanana and others returned to Akola. Gajanana was educated up to the fourth standard Marathi at Akola. Narayanrao, his oldest brother, was then transferred to Washim, where Gajanana accompanied him for continuing his education. But in a month or two Gajanana left off attending school. Many Saints used to visit Washim at that time. Harihara Swami Maharaja happened to come there and stayed for about eight or ten days in the temple of Karuneshwara. He was observing a vow of silence and communicated his thoughts by writing on a slate. There also lived permanently at Washim a Saint, named Nange Maharaja, who had constructed a hut for himself by the side of a tank, called "Phutake Tale." An old Brahman who had devoted himself to the service of Nange Maharaja for about twenty years, was also stopping with him.

(18) Meeting with Nange Maharaja:- This Nange Maharaja was always smiling and writing something in some unknown alphabets in crooked lines on blank paper and then tearing it off. Gajanana began to go every day for the Darshan of these two Saints. He used to sit near Nange Maharaja and thus had the good fortune of getting much of his company. If any one came for the Darshan of Nange Maharaja, he used to say to him, "Give me flesh." Some believers used to give him uncooked flesh and half a bottle of wine as asked by him. He never touched any other food. When he used to leave his hut and go out, he used to walk so fast that his feet hardly seemed to touch the ground. He used to go to long distances but returned and was again seen in his hut, in an incredibly short time.

Once some one gave him a bottle of wine. Gajanana was then sitting near him. He gave Gajanana half of the bottle saying, "Take Prasada." Gajanana drank it off. It tasted like milk, even sweeter than milk. When this Nange Maharaja breathed his last, a riot between Hindus and Mohammedans of Washim was imminent. Hindus considered him a Hindu Saint, while Mohammedans considered him a Mohammedan Saint. Hindus said that they

would dispose of the Saint's body according to the rites of Hindu Religion and construct a Samadhi over the remains.

Mohammedans insisted upon disposing of the body according to their religion and building a Kabar (tomb). Government brought a police party and the disturbance was prevented. Mr. King, who was the judge then, gave orders that Hindus and Mohammedans should do everything jointly and that both the communities should be allowed to go for Darshan. At the time when these events occurred, Gajanana was present at Washim.

(19) Whims of the Saint:- Regarding this Nange Maharaja, the people of Washim used to narrate that when he first came to Washim he stopped in the house of an old prostitute. Nobody, however, knew from what place he had come there. Once, while he was staying with her, he asked for the brass box containing all her ornaments. As she had full faith in him, she at once brought the box and kept it near him. He took it up and threw it into the deep water of the tank known as "Phutke Tale." Still that old prostitute did not say anything. One day he went to the temple of Karuneshwara, answered the call of nature there and besmeared the Pindi of Mahadev there with the dirt. He was all the while uttering abuses and talking at random, occasionally saying, "What people are these! They are worshipping a stone!" Some people, who did not understand him, beat him and handed him over to the Authorities. He was sent to jail but somehow he came out of the jail and since then he left off speaking and took up the vow of silence. Such are the whims of Saints !

(20) Teli Maharaja and Khatiya Maharaja:- Narayanro was then again transferred to Akola, where he remained till his retirement and where he is staying even now. Gajanana also naturally stopped with Narayanrao at Akola. As, however, he had a keen desire of taking the Darshan of Saints and of being in their company, having heard that there was a saint known as Teli Maharaja at Darva, Gajanana alone went to Darva and stopped there for seven or eight days, every day taking the Darshan of Teli Maharaja and passing as much time as possible in his company. After that, having heard that a Saint known as Khatia Maharaja was at Yeotmal, he went there and remained some time in his company. This Khatia Maharaja used to unyoke the bullocks of any one's bullock-cart, give them fodder and water and then allow them some rest. He always used to tell people not to yoke weak and old bullocks and used to prevent any one doing so.

In this manner Gajanana took the Darshan of many Saints and enjoyed the benefit of their company. Among them all was Tapkiri Buwa of Pandharpur also. He looked upon them all with the same feeling of reverence which he felt for his Sadguru Shri Narayan Saraswati, and at the end of his stay at Akola, he succeeded in experiencing the over flooding ecstasy of the bliss of self.

(21) Shree Gulabrao Maharaja :- Later on Gajanana Maharaja came in long and intimate contact with Shri Gulabrao Maharaja who considered himself the daughter of Jnaneshwar Maharaja and the beloved Gopi of Lord Shri Krishna. Shree Gulabrao Maharaja appeared to Gajanana Maharaja in the form of Shri Narayan Saraswati and thus convinced him that

all saints are one in spirit and made him realise the truth of this. In meditation Gajanana Maharaja got actual experience that Shri Gulabrao-Maharaja was none other than Shri Narayan Saraswati himself.

(22) Meditation:- From the place where Gajanana Maharaja was stopping at Akola, at a distance of about a furlong or two, there is a fort, Gajanana Maharaja used to go to this secluded spot (in the fort) for meditation by day as well as by night. Nobody knew about this. Jackals came there at night and hooted. Once or twice through fear of the jackals Gajanana Maharaja had to run away from the place. He, however, always went there for meditation.

(23) Inner Voice :- Once while Gajanana Maharaja was sitting there in meditation he heard a sound saying, "Do not be afraid, after four or five days more you will never feel the sensation of fear in the least." Owing to this he gained great courage and continued his daily practice. After some time the hootings of jackals ceased altogether and at the time of meditation he began to be submerged in joy. Again one night four or five jackals began to hoot. While returning home Gajanana Maharaja saw some jackals on the way. They, however, did not molest him in the least and allowed him to go on his way.

(24) Mr. Shivrambhou Gupte:- One friend of Gajanana Maharaja, named Shivrambhou Gupte, was then living in Gawalipura at Akola and he alone knew about Gajanana Maharaja's place of meditation and about his going to and coming back from that place. None else knew anything about it. Occasionally Gajanana Maharaja used to sleep in the house of this friend after returning at night from that place after meditation.

(25) Ecstasy:- Sometimes in the house of this friend some miracles took place naturally at the hands of Gajanana Maharaja. Shivrambhou Gupte, Gajanana Maharaja's friend, was at that time about 30 years old. He was a petition writer in the Mamlatdar Kacheri there. He was a near relative of Gajanana Maharaja and had a great affection for and faith in him. It is now twenty or twenty-two years since Mr. Shivrambhou's death took place. When Gajanana Maharaja told him about his sitting for meditation in the fort and gave him an idea of his experiences, he advised him saying, "Child, you should not go at night to the fort." To which Gajanana Maharaja replied, "I do not go of my own accord. A superhuman power leads me there and I feel a wave of ecstasy surging in me and that power again brings me back safely. My Sadguru is extremely kind. He guides my thoughts. As soon as the idea enters my mind, the mind itself begins to repeat, "Soham", "Soham". I myself make no effort."

Gajanana Maharaja, later on, began to sit for meditation in the house of Shivrambhou Gupte. At that time, near the temple of Rajeshwara, there lived a gentleman named Amrit Abaji Karnik, he has written many works in Sanskrit. He used to worship Devi in the Navaratra according to the Shakta Ritual. Gajanana Maharaja used to visit his house at those times.

Once during the Navaratra, when Gajanana Maharaja had gone to the house of Mr. Karnik, materials of worship were kept near the Goddess, among which there was a bottle of wine.

(26) Mr. Karnik :- Mr. Karnik was then staying in the old house of Mr. Khaparde, Pleader. Gajanana Maharaja was offered wine as the “Prasad” of the Goddess. Maharaja's aunt was present there and she told Maharaja not to take it. Maharaja, however, drank it off and ran home. The Japa of “Soham” proceeded of itself with great force in a state of abstraction induced by the wine.

The aunt abused Gajanana Maharaja and mentioned the fact to Shivrambhou Gupta, who asked Maharaja as to why he had taken the wine. He replied, “Once before, Nange Maharaja had also given me wine as “Prasad.” I drank it and it tasted as sweet as nectar. I felt a sensation of great joy. I took the wine at Mr. Karnik's house thinking that it might be “Prasad” of the same kind. My aunt had told me not to take it. I did not obey her and took it as I did not like the idea of refusing “Prasad”. It had no bad effect upon me. On the contrary I felt a sensation of great joy and a sense of exhilaration.”

Although Gajanana Maharaja is a Kayastha Prabhu by caste and in some families of his caste there is a custom of eating mutton and drinking wine, still in his family these things had been strictly tabooed.

(27) Miracles and the Anxiety Caused :- Many miracles happened at the hands of Gajanana Maharaja at this time quite naturally and without any conscious effort on his part. They all happened among his friends and were not revealed by them. On the contrary efforts were made to keep them secret. As Gajanana Maharaja was then quite a lad, a cripple and did not even wash his mouth properly, they thought that if these miracles got known abroad, people would ridicule them or think that they were tricks of ghosts and evil spirits. Later on these miracles began to occur even in other places, when Gajanana Maharaja happened to visit the house of a pleader there or the houses of other acquaintances. Some people then asked Gajanana Maharaja whether they should communicate these miracles to the pleader and other people and whether he would perform some miracles in the presence of others people. To this Maharaja replied, “I do not know anything about these miracles. I am not conscious of them. How can I then say anything regarding them? I do not know what these miracles are and why they occur. You know more about them, I sit at one place in a state of meditation. How can I then throw light on these things?”

The members of Maharaja's family did not know anything about these miracles and no one had told them. When Gajanana Maharaja heard about these miracles from other people, he began to feel a sort of fear that people would entertain various doubts regarding him, would blame him and would think that perhaps he was in league with evil spirits. This fear later on assumed the form of keen anxiety and he began to feel very uneasy. He was then about eighteen or nineteen years old. When he was sitting in meditation, once he saw a vision in which it was made clear to him that such miracles

often occurred in the case of Yogis unconsciously without any effort on their part and there was no reason for getting uneasy on account of them. When this elucidation was vouchsafed to him, Gajanana Maharaja became free from anxiety and was greatly delighted.

(28) Boyish Whim :- Gajanana, having seen the Shakti Pujan at Mr. Karnik's, thought, according to his boyish mood, that he should also try the Shakti Pujan, in the manner he had seen.

Mr. Karnik used to hold a pot of wine to be offered to the Goddess and used to sit in meditation as if the Goddess would come and take the wine from his hand.

Gajanana, taking all the puja material, shut himself up in a room in the house of Mr. Shivrambhau Gupte and started his experiment. He imitated Mr. Karnik in all his ways, solemnly offered his prayers, shut his eyes, but nothing came out of this. The next night, the same experiment was repeated but with the same result.

The third night, Gajanana persisted on the experiment and immediately went into the ecstatic condition. A thought occurred to him that his puja though offered to Shakti, should automatically reach his Guru. And lo ! He saw that the offerings were transformed from wine to milk and flesh into rose-flowers, and the garland offered to the deity was seen on his own person.

When Gajanana came to his consciousness, to his surprise he found that there was an actual change in the Puja material, as he had seen it in the state of meditation.

At this time, Mr. Shivrambhau who was peeping through the chink of the door rushed in and fell at the feet of Gajanana Maharaja, who blessed him and initiated him with the "Soham" Mantra.

(29) Darshan of Saints:- After this Gajanana Maharaja's practice of meditation went on smoothly and he got the Darshan of Riddhi Siddhi (Goddesses, who are presiding deities of powers acquired by Yoga practice), and of several Saints. All the Saints heartily gave him their blessings and said, "Your Yoga is now complete. You will now be in a state of meditation ceaselessly. You have now become a Siddha (a perfect Yogi). Whatever Mantra you will give to a spiritual aspirant, it will be attended with success. If you will touch an aspirant, he will make progress on the path of Yoga." Then the Saints disappeared.

(30) Mental Worship of Sadguru:- One day at night, Gajanana Maharaja sat in meditation. His Sadguru appeared before him and Gajanana Maharaja worshipped him and offered him the Naivedya. His Sadguru thereupon smiled and said, "All this is not required, but the real truth is yourself i.e. your devotion and faith. You yourself are the real bliss. Enjoy this bliss!" So saying, he disappeared. Since then, at the time of meditation Shri Narayan Saraswati sat near Gajanana Maharaja and all the materials of

worship, such as milk, shira, garlands of flowers, etc., etc. which were merely mentally conceived, were actually observed by others to be lying in front of Shri Gajanana Maharaja in the physical world. People often saw a garland of flowers round the neck of Gajanana Maharaja without anyone placing it there.

(31) Disappearance of the Idol :- While Shri Gajanana Maharaja was at Akola a number of miracles occurred naturally at his hands. Only a few of them which were narrated by different eye-witnesses are given below.

While Gajanana Maharaja was at Akola, a wonderful miracle occurred at his hands, when he was only about thirteen years old. This curious incident was lately reported to the writer of this life-sketch in a letter by a gentleman named Mr. Pandit written from Khar Road, Bombay, after nearly 34 years of its occurrence. An old lady neighbour, an aunt of one Mr. Rambhau, was one day worshipping as usual a bronze idol of Lord Krishna, in her room. Gajanana in company, with some other boys of his age had a whim to play a childish trick with her. He, therefore, asked her what she would do if he made her Balkrishna disappear from there. The old lady did not pay any attention to this silly boy. Gajanana, therefore, gave an order, quite innocently of course, to the idol to go away from there. To the surprise of everybody the said idol of Shri Krishna disappeared in the space. The old lady got horrified at this jugglery and began actually to weep at the disappearance of her beloved idol. She said that she would not take meals until the idol was restored. At last Gajanana took pity on the old lady and asked her to spread her palms.

Gajanana then as innocently as before ordered the idol to come back. To the pleasant surprise of her and others present there the little idol was again seen in her palms. This was the first miraculous happening observed in the life of Gajanana Maharaja at the early age of thirteen only.

(32) Mrs. Dighe's Account:- One Mrs. Dighe from Akola visited Gajanana Maharaja in the month of February 1940. She narrated the following account of which she was an eye-witness. She was a playmate of Gajanana in his boyhood.

(i) It was the month of May. Gajanana, a boy of sixteen, was then sitting in the house of Mr. Rambhau Gupte Pleader's clerk, which was close to the house of the Pleader. Most of the inmates of Mr. Gupte's house were assembled there. They requested Gajanana to procure for them some roses as he had obtained miraculous powers from evil spirits and they had heard of his having performed many miracles through their help. Thereupon Gajanana remarked : "Do you wish that I should invoke the evil spirits and get myself killed by them? It is all sheer nonsense that I am possessed by evil spirits. The miracles which appear to occur at my hands are not done by me intentionally nor do I know at the time how they occur. They occur at the instance of some unknown Higher Power. I receive a strange shock and a light appears before me. This light later on takes the form of my Sadguru and then sometimes such things occur. As they appear miraculous, people attribute them to the working of evil spirits.

“Any how do anything you like, but do get some roses for us” was the persistent request of the people. Gajanana then went out of the room and within a couple of minutes returned. All the-while people watched his movements. He came back into the room and threw 20 to 30 roses all over the floor.

Mr. Gupte Pleader's father, Mr. Martandrao Gupte, who was also a pleader, preserved some of these roses in a steel safe, in order to test their nature. To his surprise, however, he found the roses in-tact in the safe. None of them had disappeared. So his idea that they had been produced with the help of evil spirits proved to be erroneous.

(ii) Gajanana always avoided taking a bath. One day some people insisted upon his taking a bath. He then consented and while he was bathing, the water gave out the fragrance of highly scented attar of Khus.

(33) Mr. Santuram Gupte :- When Maharaja was at Akola, there lived one gentleman named Mr. Santuram Gupte, in the house where Maharaja lived. He was a reader in the District Court here. His wife got a serious attack of typhoid with pneumonia. Maharaja merely asked the people of the family to burn camphor near her and she was cured.

(34) Gajanana Maharaja in Bombay :- After visiting many places of pilgrimage Shri Gajanana Maharaja went to stay with Mr. Narayanrao Samartha at Parel in Bombay. Mr. Samartha was his relative and was employed in Parel Mills. He had received initiation at the hands of Maharaja.

One day one Mr. Moreshwarrao Mathure came to Mr. Samartha. He was also employed in Parel Mills. This Mathure in his boyhood was staying in the house of Mr. Gupte, Pleader at Akola and was attending a school. At that time Mr. Narayanrao Gupte (the poet “Bee”) was also staying at Akola with his aunt and younger brothers as he was employed in Government Service there.

(35) Mr. Mathure:- Laxmanrao Gupte, one of the elder brothers of Gajanana Maharaja, was a class-fellow of Mr. Mathure and both of them were then studying in the fourth standard Marathi. Gajanana Maharaja was then learning the first standard. Mathure, therefore, knew Gajanana Maharaja then. More than fourteen years had passed since that time, when Mathure saw Gajanana Maharaja again at Parel. Maharaja was at the time sitting in meditation. Mr. Mathure asked Nana Samartha as to who the man was, to which Mr. Samartha replied that he was Gajanana, the youngest brother of Narayanrao Gupte (the poet “Bee”) of Akola and that he was called Gajanana Maharaja.. Mr. Mathure said, “Is this Gajanana Murlidhar Gupte? When did he become a Maharaja ? Some time ago, Ramchandra Mahadeo Gupte, a pleader's clerk, had been to Bombay from Akola. He too told me about several miracles performed by this Gajanana in the house of Mr. Gupte, pleader at Akola, in whose house I also was staying in my childhood ; but I did not believe him, because this Gajanana in his childhood was a truant and a vagabond and was very mischievous. I know his brother Laxmanrao very well. You and myself belong to the same place Mahad and are also related to each

other. You too call him "Maharaja" and I now see him sitting in meditation. I am, therefore, compelled to believe that he must have in him something peculiar deserving of respect. Formerly Gajanana Maharaja of Shegaon used to come to Akola. This Gajanana then used to go to take his Darshan and to attend upon him. That Maharaja whenever he wanted to benefit any one, used to give that person a slap in the face. I myself had observed this peculiarity two or three times. I think that that Maharaja might have perhaps conferred his grace upon him. This Gajanana in his childhood was very fond of taking the Darshan of Saints. All right, it is now very late. I shall come to you again some time and then meet him at leisure."

Two or three days later Mathure again went to Mr. Samartha's place. Gajanana Maharaja was also there then but he could not recognize Mathure. He, however, asked Maharaja several questions regarding practising meditation and Maharaja answered them.

When a question was raised about the use of reading religious books, Maharaja observed that the only use of books was to arouse a keen desire to know. The reading of books did not deserve more credit than that. One should not, therefore, stick to books alone. If a person becomes addicted to the reading of books, his own powers of thinking and of discriminating between good and bad become weak and vacillating and when this happens his whole life becomes futile and worthless. The most important thing in life is to get self-experience. After this conversation was over, Maharaja also asked Mr. Mathure his name, whereabouts, profession and other particulars. During these questions and answers Maharaja came to recognize his former acquaintance and having observed Mathure closely and specially his eyes remarked, "Mathure, do you practise Pranayama?" Mathure was very much surprised and asked Maharaja as to how he could find it out. Maharaja replied, "Quite naturally. By looking at your face, I could understand it by the grace of my Guru." Mathure was greatly surprised at this and turning towards Mr. Nana Samartha said, "This is not the Gajanana of former days. Owing to the grace of his Sadguru, a great transformation has taken place in his state." Mr. Samartha replied, "Moroba, this Gajanana is now traversing the path of everlasting happiness. He has attained a very high stage owing to the grace of his Guru. He is a great Saint but he does not wish this fact to be known and I too, respecting his wishes, do not say anything about it to any one. As in the bazaar every one must test a coin himself and find out whether it is true or false, similarly in the case of Saints every one should find out for himself. Moroba, I am, however, glad that I have met a real Saint."

Mr. Mathure then asked Nana Samartha whether he had got any spiritual experiences himself and whether he would tell them to him. Mr. Samartha replied, "Maharaja told me to repeat the Mantra of "Soham," which I did continuously for four or five years. I got various experiences. I heard various kinds of sounds internally such as those of tabor, bells, thunder, blowing of conches and jingling of small brass plates. I got the Darshan of various Saints and Deities. I saw mountains and rivers. I got the Darshan of Vishnu and saw the form of Shri Krishna in a spark of light. Sometimes I felt I was descending into deep valleys where there was dense darkness

succeeded by strong light. At present, however, all, these visions have disappeared and I go into the state of Samadhi lasting for an hour or an hour and a half. The feeling of joy experienced in that state cannot be described in words. I also have several times experienced different kinds of fragrant smells, such as that of flowers, scented sticks, incense, etc. You know, I suffer from attacks of asthma very often. But I am glad to tell, you that when in meditation, I do not feel even the slightest pain from the malady. If you practise meditation as told by Maharaja you too would get these experiences. It is not that every one gets the same experiences. It all depends upon one's capacity and aptitude of mind. It is only necessary to carry on the practice, steadily and perseveringly. In course of time, this habit of meditation sticks to you of itself and whether you will do it or not, you carry it on, as it were compelled by some unknown force. Such is the power centred in the Mantra, "Soham", I cannot say anything more.

Then Mathure said to Maharaja, "Gajananrao, now I must call you Maharaja." To this Maharaja replied, "No, No. I am not a Maharaja. I am a servant of you all. That Sadguru who conferred his grace upon me is the real Maharaja." Mathure said, "I am very glad to see this humility of yours. I now request you to come to my place and give Darshan to all the members of my family and bless me. I shall just call for a victoria."

Then Mathure brought a victoria and took Maharaja to his place. There Mathure's sister recognized Maharaja and all talked together for some time. Then Mathure left the house and went to the market. During his absence his sister told Maharaja that Mathure was practising Pranayama, owing to which he had lost balance of mind and sometimes talked incoherently and at random and sometimes lay down hours together in a state of semi-consciousness. She, therefore, requested Maharaja to take compassion on him and lead him to the right path. When Mathure returned Maharaja made him sit near him and said, "Your practice of Pranayama is not correct. You have learnt it from some novice in Yoga and hence it is all wrong. You now leave this Pranayama. Moroba, to practise Pranayama is not an easy task. If properly done, it is all right, otherwise it leads to disastrous consequences. Hence it is much better and also easier to get control over the mind instead of trying to get control over the breath. After getting control over the mind, if you get control over your breath, it would be extremely beneficial. It is hence hazardous to get oneself initiated at the hands of a Guru who has not completed his Yoga." Mathure having heard this, asked, "Maharaja, what is the definition of a Sadguru? Please explain it to me."

Maharaja:- I am not a well-read man and I do not know Vedanta or its principles. I shall, however, try to explain the matter to you in the light of my experiences. A Yogi who has realized Brahman in himself is a Sadguru and his word should be accepted as authoritative because he has attained the highest goal. Whatever he says is the Shashtra (Scripture) and what he propounds is the Gita because the essence of all spiritual works is in his heart. There are some Yogis who have reached a stage of perfection and have experiences of all things but are unable to impart instructions in Yoga to others. Aspirants, therefore, cannot be benefited by going to them. It would

merely be waste of time and would sometimes lead to definite loss or harm. One should not, therefore, put faith in such Sadgurus.

In Raja Yoga, otherwise known as Dhyana Yoga, one who wishes to attain the spiritual goal must practise a good deal and that too regularly. Besides one must feel great devotion towards his Guru and to a certain extent must be disgusted with worldly existence. Blind faith is harmful in Raja Yoga and is contrary to its principles. If a Guru or a Saint merely asks you to put your faith in him and he does not make you realise some experience in your Self, you should tell him plainly that there is nothing secret in Raja Yoga, which is not a mysterious science. All its practices are open. Those who merely rely on their Guru without trying to get any self-experience, weaken the power of their self and would find themselves deluded in the end. Those who say that Yoga is a secret lore are either deceivers and cheats or imperfect Yogis and it is better to keep at a distance from them; because they bring a stigma on that celestial science and contribute to its decadence. Thousands of years have elapsed since the birth of this Yoga-Shastra in this blessed land of India. Since then various sages have dived deep into it and given it the form of a definite science and explained it openly to various aspirants.

Dear Mathure, you must have read various books on this subject, but I have told this to you in short, not from what I have read but from what I have experienced in myself. You will be fully convinced of its truth when you also would get that Self experience. You cannot be expected to put your faith in me, because we have stayed together in our childhood and known each other's character well and it would be difficult for you to believe that I have acquired any great efficiency in Yoga. Hence I had to explain to you at some length.

In comparatively modern times, various modern learned men have written commentaries on Yoga-Shastra but I have heard that they have committed many mistakes. Old commentators were much better because their commentaries are based more upon solid reasoning calculated to satisfy the intellect. But these latter commentators have covered the Yoga lore with mystery and created an atmosphere of difficulty about it. These later commentators instead of explaining all things more openly and on a scientific basis, have made the Yoga-Shastra a bogey and rendered it more incomprehensible. The only advantage they got from doing so, was the absolute power which they could exercise over their disciples, in their capacity as so called "Gurus".

Mathure then said to Maharaja, "I shall leave off Pranayama but you kindly take me under your protection, bless me and lead me to the right path." He then immediately garlanded Maharaja and placed his head on Maharaja's feet. Observing his keen desire Maharaja told him the Mantra "Soham" and directed him to concentrate his mind upon his favourite Deity. Immediately inner sight was given to him and he could see various Deities full of light at all the Chakras (plexuses). He was then asked to fix his attention firmly at the centre between the eye-brows. He then could experience various fragrant smells. He got the Darshan in his inner vision of various Saints, Siddhas,

Temples, Rivers and Mountains. He could hear various sounds, thunder coming last. Beginning from the Muladhar Chakra, the different chakras were manifested to him and he was told how to enter the Sushumna nerve and was-taken to the Sahasradala (plexus at the centre of the brain).

Maharaja then told him that if he would practise meditation, daily in the way shown, he would soon get self-realisation and attain the highest goal of human life. Maharaja then added, "This path of meditation has been shown to you by me through my Guru's grace and inspiration. I have up to this time shown this path to some of my friends and I shall show it to others in future, only through the grace and by the order of my Guru. But the result or success will depend upon everyone's keenness in practising and his faith in self. Consider self-experience as your real Sadguru. Then there would be no necessity of relying upon the-words of others, however great they be. Hence I say there is nothing secret in this path. What little I have told you has been told freely and with frankness. You should not pay any attention to miracles because they are absolutely useless. Every step in this path of Yoga should be minutely scrutinised by the inner sight and tested by experience and reasoning. Where you cannot understand, Shastras may be referred to. I would never tell you to place your blind faith in any one, as I consider that to do so leads to self-ruin, Awaken your discriminating power, test every thing in the light of your experience as you test gold in fire and on the touch-stone. If you think that there is some sense in what I say, try to realise it in your experience. There is no cause of fear in this path. Truth can be proclaimed in broad daylight to thousands of people. There is no danger to it. You should, however, keep away from pseudo-saints."

In the course of conversation with Mathure, Maharaja had remarked that if Mathure would practise meditation as directed, course of time he would reach even the state of Samadhi. Mathure thereupon asked Maharaja, "Do you go into Samadhi? What is the nature of your practice?" Maharaja replied, "I was practising meditation and going into the state of Samadhi even when I was in my mother's womb. Now I do not do anything and I cannot do anything. I only drink liquor, abuse others and quietly listen to the abuses given by others. Strictly speaking I do not do anything; whatever appears to be done by me is done by Rama (God). I am simply as it were playing in this world in a peaceful state of mind. I do not understand Vedanta and its theories. I am, however, seeking in myself my own self which is one and beyond all these things, which is eternal, which is life and which is joy incarnate."

Mathure :- It is said that one must have the support (Adhishthana) of God. Please explain to me what is meant by this.

Maharaja :- Mathure, you have learnt too much of Vedanta. I myself feel that there is no support of anything to any other thing. Do not pay any attention to the above mentioned saying regarding the support of God. Try to get the support of your own self. Make the three things one, viz., the meditator, the act of meditation and the entity to be meditated upon, and be absorbed into the state of joy. It will be of no use reading and discussing about what is written in thousands of books. In order to attain one's goal, three

things are necessary, viz., association with Saints, devotion towards one's Guru and disgust with worldly life. If your conduct is pure, if you try to follow principles of morality, obey your parents and serve them and your mind is full of disinterested devotion and you repeat the mantra given by your Guru, your mind is sure to be ultimately purified. He who experiences the joy of his own self, naturally and easily follows these rules of conduct !

Mathure :- Maharaja, how long have you been addicted to this vice of drinking ?

Maharaja :- Dear Mathure, this is a question which should neither be asked by you nor answered by me. But as you are older than me and are asking this question with a good intention, I am going to answer it. You have read much and have visited various saints and taken their Darshana. In Akola too, you saw various Saints.

Please understand that Saints who have attained Self-realization are never addicted to any vice. All their desires have vanished. People like you and me think that they are addicted to certain vices, because we look at them from the worldly point of view, owing which real saints and their conduct in this world are misunderstood.

There is another thing. In order to avoid trouble from world and the people in it, many real saints make a pretence of being addicted to certain vices or in some cases they show by their peculiar conduct that they are crack-brained. The real object is to avoid close contact with the people of the world. Sincere aspirants, however, are not deceived by these external appearances and get themselves benefited by such Saints. The real mission of Saints in this world is to guide aspirants on the spiritual path. Chitari Maharaja of Nate, who later on became well-known as Anant Nath used to eat flesh and things not permitted by the Shastras. Nange Maharaja of Washim used to drink liquor. Satam Maharaja who was staying with the Chief of Sawantwadi used to drink beer almost continuously. But all these saints had realised Brahman and they were not addicted to these things but were internally absolutely detached.

Regarding my vice you will in future come to know about its real nature by experience. I am not, however, to be understood to mean that I should be considered to be a Saint because I have got this vice. I am a humble servant of Sadguru. I am still in the sadhaka stage and am still carrying on the practice of Yoga. I always tell my friends that I do not know anything about devotion or knowledge or detachment. I, however, wish to impress upon you that while there are a few real saints who can be counted on one's fingers, there are thousands of hypocrites who merely imitate the outward behaviour of real Saints. People in the world cannot recognize real worth. They cannot recognize a real gem but are attracted by the tinsel lustre of false diamonds. It is difficult under these circumstances to find out the worth of a genuine coin.

Mathure :- Maharaja, from the time I was at Akola I have seen many pseudo-saints. Their method of testing the devotion of their followers was very

peculiar. Some said, "Serve me and then you will be purified." Some asked their followers to keep their wives in their (saints') company and to devote their money, mind and body to their (saints') service. Some Saint said, "I was the husband of your sister in her former life, so keep her with me". Some asked people to make their minds pure first of all and then go to the Saints. Some said, "You are not as yet fit for the reception of spiritual knowledge."

In this way they used to dispose of persons going to them for spiritual advice. Some Buwas have amassed vast estates by accepting worship and thousands of rupees as Dakshina from their followers. Some are attended upon by women. Some Buwa always propound Vedanta by their mouths. Some purposely put on a very shabby and dirty dress, while some even remain naked. But these are all tricks with a view to create an impression on the minds of aspirants. Some say, "We have purposely been sent into this world by God for the uplift of women. We had taken great pains from our childhood, had gone to the Himalayas and practised severe penance in the caves there. Shri Shankar then manifested Himself to us and gave us a boon (like the one given to Bhasmasura) that we would be the saviours of women. Hence we are fulfilling our mission."

Maharaja :- Moroba Mathure, I have carefully listened to what you have said. I too have heard about the various tricks practised by many so called saints, similar to those described by you. You just now cited the illustration of Bhasmasura. I say that perhaps God might have granted such a boon to some of these saints. Why should we not accept their word ?

Mathure :- Maharaja, I must say that you are misleading me by such words.

Maharaja :- Mathure, I am not misleading you. Even in old times, when many great saints who had attained self realization flourished, there were also side by side hypocrites and pseudo saints. At present too we have some specialists who have been given a boon to save only women. These things will always go on. Only we should not allow ourselves to be deceived and should learn to distinguish the true from the false coin. Shri Tukaram has remarked regarding such saints, "Tuka says that such (false) saints should be buried underground alive." Shri, Ramdas has also remarked that crores of such Gurus can be had for a pice. When I was at Akola, I too was for about 4 or 5 years going after such saints ; but God saved me from their machinations and I was able to warn about twenty or twenty-five of my friends also. These saints were later on thoroughly, exposed and we thanked God for having saved us from them.

Mathure :- Maharaja, what you say is quite true. People who fall a prey to the various tricks of false saints and make efforts to stand the various tests laid down by them, in many cases are ruined both from the worldly and the spiritual points of view. Your test on the contrary viz. of concealing your greatness under the garb of vice is much better. No crowds collect round you. There are no photographs of deities, there is no Bhajana and there is no paraphernalia of materials of worship. You mix yourself in whatever is going

on. He who does not know this fact may perhaps be misled by your drinking and abusing and may perhaps leave off coming to you. This, however, will not ruin him in any way. He, however, who had come in contact with you in his previous birth, will, in spite of all these external appearances, stick to you and be surely benefited.

Now, Maharaja, I shall ask you one question. Many people, who are either atheists or pose as atheists, ask me questions regarding the existence of God and challenge me to prove it. Although I have firm faith in God, I get nonplussed at such questions, have to eat the humble pie and to say that it is a question of every one's belief and not a thing capable of proof. Will you kindly tell me how to answer such questions? Can the existence of God be proved by arguments?

Maharaja :- I think the following is an easy and a scientific way of answering the question. Water may be produced by the chemical combination of hydrogen and oxygen, as the science of Chemistry says, but the calculation of the proportion in which these two gases are to be combined can only be made by an intelligent agent. This faculty of calculating cannot dwell in unintelligent matter. There is such a vast expanse of water in this world. That intellect which calculated this proportion and produced this immense quantity of water could not belong to dull matter nor to any being of limited capacities. This universal intellect can only belong to a Being of Universal Power, who is none other than God. If, however, any of your questioners say that matter has intelligence, then it is nothing but the doctrine of Vedanta that Brahman is all pervading and is the only entity existing, only expressed in a different way. The distinction between matter and intelligence then disappears and one entity remains.

Thus whether you look at the question from a scientific point of view or religious point of view, it cannot be doubted that God exists.

Mathure :- Maharaja, you say that you are ignorant, that you have studied only Marathi and that too up to the Fourth Standard, that you have not read any Shastras. Then how is it that you are able to answer such questions cleverly? Although I have read a good deal, I cannot answer such questions and find myself confounded.

Maharaja :- I have heard educated men discussing among themselves and have learnt some facts mentioned in various books from educated men. I then thought over these things myself and through the grace of my Guru, I can immediately remember things heard long ago and am able to give appropriate answers. I firmly believe that at such a time my Sadguru really speaks through my mouth and not myself. In my, childhood I always attended Kirtans and Purans and carefully listened to any discussion on the Shastras. Later on I read whatever religions books fell into my hands. I thus read some Upanishads and the Yoga Shastra of Patanjali. Some of these books I read myself and some I got explained to me, by others. I have also read lives of some Saints. Hence I have been telling to my friends, brothers and sisters, whatever I have learnt from the lives of Saints, Only now-a-days I

have almost left off doing so. At present I do not do anything, and show as if I do not know anything. I find it necessary to let the world think that I am full of defects. To show off one's merits is to deceive others as well as oneself. Rishis in ancient times, too, tried to create an impression on people that they were full of defects.

Mathure :- Maharaja, shall I be able to see my Soul in the state of meditation. It has been said that the human soul is also the same as God.

Maharaja :- Now enough of this Vedanta. You will be able to see your soul. I say so because I myself have some experience of it. I see that you are trying to pump out information from me. But it appears to me that this our meeting was decreed by fate, otherwise I would not have afforded you any opportunity, to do so. I have a feeling of great affection for Nana Samarth who told you of many miracles which occurred at my hand. That generated great faith in your mind towards me. Besides Mr. Gupte of Akola also told you about me and the many miracles which happened at Akola at my hands. All this has swept off all dirt of doubt from your mind and it has become full of faith. Hence I am compelled to tell you.

Now just see. When your meditation would become ripe and developed, you will be able to see how the soul slowly enters the Sushumna and is seen like a streak of lightning for a time before it enters the Brahmarandhra (the centre of the brain). Only the attention must be quite alert. Otherwise it passes off so quickly that it is not noticed at all. All right. I have told you this particular sign. If you observe minutely with close attention, you will be able to see it. I had pointed this out to Mr. Shivrambhai at Akola.

Mathure :- I wish to, ask one more question. What is your opinion regarding miracles ?

Maharaja :- There are some Mahatmas at whose hands miracles do occur. But these great Saints do not care for the miracles in the least. There are also some real Saints at whose hands miracles do not occur. But they are not on that account to be considered as not Saints. Saints belonging to different religions have performed miracles. Whatever mantras have come out of the mouths of these Saints regarding God, are bound to be attended with success provided they are properly repeated. That means that a spiritual aspirant or a devotee may belong to any religion or caste, he is sure to attain the right path, provided he follows the right methods.

Mathure, now enough of all these discussions. Nana Samarth must be waiting for me, I shall again visit you at some other time. You should now carry on the practice of meditation vigorously. If you do so you will obtain real peace, although you may be leading a worldly life.

After this, Maharaja took leave of Mathure. Mr. Mathure died recently at the age of 58. He had reached the stage of Samadhi.

(36) Shree Rama Maruti, Kalyan :- While Shri Gajanana Maharaja was in Bombay he happened to go to Kalyan, where there was a Saint by name Shree Rama Maruti.

When Gajanana Maharaja went to this Saint, he saw him sitting on a pedestal. After bowing down to him Gajanana Maharaja requested him to let him know as to what stage he was then in his practice of Yoga and whether he was going on rightly.

Shree Rama Maruti replied that both of them were in the same stage in the Yoga Path and that it was strange for Gajanana Maharaja that he should put such a question deliberately.

Shree Rama Maruti was observing a vow of silence and so was communicating by writing on a slate. He wrote down that Gajanana and himself were the Avatars of Chauranginath. After receiving his blessings Gajanana Maharaja returned to Bombay.

About two months after Shree Rama Maruti left this world. When Maharaja was at Parel, some four or five of the disciples of that Saint went to see Maharaja at Parel. They had not previously seen Maharaja and had no idea of his personality and characteristics. They entered the room where Maharaja was sitting and opened talk with him not knowing that he was Maharaja whom they had gone there to see. Maharaja also did not know these men. Although Maharaja was staying in Parel for about 10 or 15 years before that, still he very rarely went to anybody's place. Sometimes some friends of Mr. Nana Samartha used to invite Maharaja to visit their houses on Dasara or Kojagiri day or on some other day for playing cards etc. But Maharaja never went to anybody's house. Hence these friends of Mr. Samartha sometimes played cards in the house of Nana Samartha.

Some of these four or five disciples of Shri Rama Maruti, who had come to visit Maharaja, were staying at Dadar and others at Kalyan. Maharaja was a little bit surprised to see them. At that time all the males of the house had gone to their offices. Mr. Samartha's family is a very large one, consisting of about 30 or 35 members but all these members stay together amicably in the same chawl. At present, however, some members of the Samartha family have left Parel and stay at Dadar. Maharaja then asked the names of his visitors. One of them told his name as Mr. Gupte. The following conversation then took place between Maharaja and Mr. Gupte.

Maharaja :- What is the object of you all in coming here ?

Gupte :- We had to spend about a hour and a half to find out this chawl. We met one man below and we asked him where Mr. Samartha stayed. He asked us to go upstairs and thus we arrived here.

Maharaja :- That is all right. What is your work with me?

Gupte :- We have no work with you. We want to see Gajanana Maharaja who stays in Mr. Samartha's place.

Maharaja :- Oh my God ! But will you please tell me who gave you information about him? If you will tell me freely, I too will tell the whole truth to you, so that you might not be misled. Your purpose then will be properly fulfilled. Otherwise you might get yourselves into an awkward situation. In speaking thus, I have a sincere desire to help you. You will come to know by experience the truth or otherwise of what I will tell you.

Gupte:- Shri Rama Maruti has left this world. I have a relative at Uran who is a Mahalkari there. He is a virtuous and a sincere man. He is not a man to recommend any person, even though that person may be a Mahatma, unless he is convinced of his greatness by his own personal experience. He is also not a man to be deceived by merely external appearances. He told me that the only person in our Kayastha caste who was worthy to occupy the Gadi of Shri Rama Maruti was Shri Gajanana Maharaja and that he was staying for many years with Mr. Samartha. Hence we have come here.

Maharaja :- Now I understand. I shall now tell you in short about Gajanana Maharaja. You may believe me or not. I leave it to you. Had Rao Saheb Sule, the Mahalkari, told you that Gajanana Maharaja has some bodily defect in his arms or feet?

Gupte :- No. He has not told me anything about it.

Maharaja :- All right. I won't ask any more questions. I shall tell you the opinion I hold about him. This opinion is based not on hearsay but on my own experience. He had almost dragged me into the meshes of the vice of drinking and it was only through sheer good fortune that I freed myself from it. He is an absolutely worthless man. He is a drunkard of the worst type. He abuses even women like a mawali. He does not care a bit for the world or for the opinions of other people. He rarely eats food. He taunts others in the presence, of their friends or acquaintances, by speaking about some awkward incident regarding them which might have occurred years ago. He repeats indecent sayings and proverbs and when some one blames him about it, tries to give them a spiritual meaning. Some people say that he performs miracles. I cannot say whether he is a follower of the Aghora Pantha (the path of evil charms etc.) or whether he has propitiated some evil spirit or whether they are tricks of hypnotism. How can people like me say anything about him to Nana Samartha ? First of all he is a cripple. Secondly he is related to Nana Samartha. Thirdly Nana considers him as his Guru and lastly all the members of his family, young and old, have full faith in him. They do not do anything without taking his advice and never transgress his orders. Of course this does not mean that every member of the family implicitly follows his advice in every matter but what I stated above is, broadly speaking, true. They all call him "Deva Mama". This being so, how can I tell Nana that I do not like his conduct? I am a resident of Akola from which place Gajanana Maharaja also comes. To place such a person on the Gadi of a Saint like Shri Rama Maruti would be an insult to the memory of that great Saint. If such a thing is done

the disciples of that great Saint would become objects of contempt and ridicule in the eyes of the world. Besides Gajanana is a cripple and he answers his calls of nature at the place where he is sitting even though women might be nearby. In short all his external behaviour at least is censurable from the ordinary worldly point of view. I cannot say anything about his internal spiritual progress, if any. He has gone away from Bombay for the present temporarily. He will return in a day or two. You should yourselves personally see, him and gather your impressions about him. I am leaving this place by tonight's train. If, however, I have to postpone my departure on some account, we shall all meet together in the presence of Gajanana Maharaja. Only I won't say anything in his presence. You should observe for yourselves and form your own opinion.

Now, therefore, all of you should go. Having heard from, someone only about the good qualities of Gajanana Maharaja, you have, in your minds, raised him to the position of a real Saint. But please go now and when we meet again tell me what your opinion regarding him after mature consideration, is. Please come over here again without fail.

As soon as Maharaja said this, one of those four or five disciples, who was a clever and keen witted man, suddenly caught hold of Maharaja's feet and would not leave them, saying, "You yourself are Gajanana Maharaja." Maharaja had ultimately to admit the fact and said, "I am not really a Maharaja; but some few persons call me so. Well, now you know me as Gajanana Maharaja, what have you to say?"

Gentlemen :- Not much. You are worthy to succeed Shri Rama Maruti.

Maharaja :- I am exactly as I described Gajanana Maharaja to be, neither more nor less.

All of them laughed at this. They were given tea. After tea Maharaja said to them, "Really I am not worthy of the honour. Even supposing I leave off all my bad habits, still I am as yet a Sadhaka. I also have not much knowledge. Whatever I appear to know, is not my own knowledge but my Guru makes me his mouthpiece and speaks through me. I only repeat the Japa in my mind without others knowing about it, as has been advised Saints. Through my Sadguru's grace, I contemplate upon him and repeat "Soham" internally. My internal dirt has not been swept off. When it would be entirely swept off by means of some broom, then I would not mind being placed on any Saint's "Gadi". Even, if I then do not occupy any "Gadi", still I would be able to initiate aspirants and guide them on the spiritual path through the order and grace of my Guru.

All right. It is now nearly five o'clock and you have to catch your train. If all of you really wish that I should succeed Shri Rama Maruti, come again a week or so hence after mature consideration and then we shall see."

All the four or five persons then left. Since then up to this time none of them has ever come to see Maharaja, nor has Maharaja ever been invited to

attend the annual anniversary festival of Shri Rama Maruti. Maharaja, however, had once or twice attended the festival of his own accord.

When Nana Samartha came to know about this, he asked Maharaja why he had not accepted their offer. He said that it was a very good offer and it would be a credit to the Kayastha Caste also. Maharaja said, "I personally have no objection to sit on the Gadi of Shri Rama Maruti. He was a great Saint. Through his grace I shall be able to carry on his work. But there is one thing. You people will lose the pleasure of my company. I shall be there surrounded by many people. Many rich persons will visit me and pay their respects to me. Who knows, I may also get a little feeling of pride and perhaps would find it a little derogatory to my dignity to be on friendly terms with people like you? Would you like it? Consider."

Nana Samartha then said to Maharaja : "Please remain as you are. If we are going to lose you, nothing else would compensate us for such loss."

This incident occurred in the month of November 1918. It was recently narrated to the writer by Maharaja himself and has been described here almost in his words.

After narrating the incident, Maharaja remarked, "That is as it should have been. I am absolutely unworthy myself, I have no intelligence. I had lost my "Self" formerly. When I found my "Self", then I became sure of my own existence. I am at present trying to find out what death is. When that is done, then I would be able to find God. Then I will enjoy perfect bliss. Every thing further may happen as it may."

(37) Persons Initiated :- During Gajanana Maharaja's stay in Bombay the following persons received initiation at his hands : Messrs. Patankar, Balasaheb Gadkari, Nanasahab Gadkari and Ramkrishnapant Gadkari. Their experiences are appended at the end. Similarly Mr. Raje from Roha and Mr. Randive also were initiated.

(38) Mr. Wamanrao Kulkarni :-When Maharaja was at Bombay he was often asked by his brother, Mr. Narayanrao, to go to Pen and other places where their family had their landed property, for recovering land-rents which amounted to about five to eight hundred rupees per annum.

During one of his visits to Pen in 1920 or 1921, he had put up with one Mr. Pradhan there. A friend of Gajanana Maharaja, one Mr. Trimbakrao Shikekar, went to him and requested him to accompany him to the village Nate *via* Roha. He said he had to bring his sister Kerubai from Roha, where her husband was living. As Maharaja was not acquainted with anyone at Roha, he hesitated to accompany him. But as Trimbakrao insisted upon Maharaja's accompanying him, he at last consented.

Next day, Trimbakrao, his friend and Maharaja started into bullock-cart in the morning and reached Roha in the evening.

Maharaja was, at that time, dressed rather shabbily and he asked Trimbakrao to tell the people there that he was his servant. Trimbakrao was unwilling to do so. But the occasion was such that it was necessary for Maharaja to remain 'inognito'.

On arriving at Roha, Trimbakrao went to his sister and told her what Maharaja had asked himself to be represented. She did not like the idea as she had heard about Maharaja being a Saint. When she came to know that these persons had come to take her with them, she was glad and she hoped that her husband's people would consent to her going.

The family consisted of Kerubai's husband Wamanrao, who was a clerk in the Mamlatdar Kacheri, his father Narayanrao, his mother, children and other near relatives. Kerubai, however, had no child although nearly eight years had elapsed since her coming of age. Some said that she was possessed of some evil spirits and so had no issue.

When these guests arrived, Narayanrao, Wamanrao's father, was at home. He received the guests and Maharaja being a stranger to him, asked him the following questions.

Narayanrao:- What is your caste? ;

Maharaja:- We people have no caste.

Narayanrao:- What is your father's name ?

Maharaja:- They say it is Murlidhar.

Narayanrao:- What is your surname ?

Maharaja:- Gupte.

He asked him no further questions. In the meantime, Wamanrao returned home and without taking any notice of the guests went straight into the house. He was told in the house that the guests had come to take Kerubai with them to her father's.

At the time of dinner in the evening, Maharaja was served outside in the verandah as he was a servant brought by the guests for driving the cart.

After dinner, arrangements for sleeping were made for the guests. Trimbakrao asked Maharaja to open the topic regarding his sister and if her people consented to her going with them, they would start early next morning. Maharaja accordingly opened the topic with Wamanrao but he did not say anything in reply. Some time later the same night, Kerubai asked her husband permission to go with her brother. Wamanrao became so enraged that she was absolutely silenced. Maharaja tried to pacify him but it was of no avail. Before going to sleep Maharaja told Trimbakrao that he would see his way next morning and that he should not yoke the bullocks till 10 o'clock.

Next morning, Maharaja told Trimbakrao and his friends to go out and said that he would again open the topic with Wamanrao. Maharaja then joined Narayanrao, the old father of Wamanrao, near the hearth. Immediately

Wamanrao came out and Maharaja asked him whether he was willing to send his wife with them, as she had not seen her parents for four or five years. Her father was also then ill. Maharaja gave these reasons and assured him that she would, be sent back in a week and that they would be highly obliged if she were allowed to accompany them.

Wamanrao got excited and told them to go away. He was not going to send his wife to her father at all. Maharaja then asked him not to lose his temper and said that though he was a servant he made himself bold to make those casual inquiries. Wamanrao became a little mollified at this and after taking tea began to explain the reasons for not sending his wife to her father's. He said that whenever she went to her parents, people there blamed him as she was possessed by evil spirits and consequently had no issue. Maharaja, thereupon, casting a glance at him asked him whether he observed any fast, to which he replied in the affirmative.

Wamanrao used to observe fast every Tuesday, having been told to do so by an astrologer who had come to Roha and of whose proficiency in that Science he had been convinced. The astrologer had directed Wamanrao to observe fasts for 36 Tuesdays. It was then the third Tuesday.

Maharaja then asked him whether he had full faith in astrology. As this question was put, Wamanrao began to think that it was rather peculiar for a person who was merely a servant, to speak in that calm, dignified and thoughtful tone. Maharaja again asked him the same question and inquired whether he had faith in astrology and would put faith in whatever Maharaja would tell him. To this he replied that it all depended upon his being convinced about the truth of what Maharaja would tell him.

Then Wamanrao went inside and brought the Panchang and gave it to Maharaja. While he went inside he was becoming comparatively calmer and calmer and he began to wonder how that man, a mere servant, was influencing him in that manner.

Maharaja looking at the Panchang said that he did not know how to read it but asked him to write down on a piece of paper, the questions which he had a wish to ask without showing them to him. Maharaja made a show of counting on his fingers and then correctly gave him the answers to all his questions. Wamanrao was extremely surprised and he at once placed his head upon Maharaja's feet and caught them firmly. He felt that Maharaja was not a servant or an astrologer but a Saint. He asked Maharaja to give him Guru Upadesh and said that he would not leave Maharaja's foot until he granted the request. Maharaja granted his request and asked him to meditate upon Shri Krishna. He also gave him the Mantra Soham and conferred upon him the internal sight. He made Wamanrao sit in front of him for half an hour repeating. "Soham" in his mind. Wamanrao saw Shri Krishna and by His side the Divine Cow full of lustre.

Then he asked Maharaja to tell him exactly who he was. He was not a servant as he feigned to be. He did not allow Maharaja to go that day. He himself took a day's leave and remained at home to attend upon the guests.

Maharaja told him who he was and said that he was only a crippled child of God. Owing to the grace of his Guru he was able to benefit people on the path of self-realization.

All were delighted and begged Maharaja's pardon for having treated him as a servant. Maharaja replied that he looked upon respect or disrespect as one. These guests remained there for a day and started next day, accompanied by Kerubai. Maharaja assured Wamanrao that he would cure his wife of her complaint and that she would have an issue. Maharaja's words came true and Kerubai got a child who is now a grown-up lad. Wamanrao also progressed well on the path of Yoga. He occasionally visited Parel (Bombay) to see Maharaja while he was there.

(39) Mahad Camp Incident:- In the next trip of Maharaja to his landed property for recovery of rents, he happened to be at Mahad. There was a friend of Maharaja by name Mr. Randive who was of a believing nature. He had been introduced to Maharaja some time before this by Mr. Vamanrao Kulkarni of Roha. He was Shirastedar to the Prant Magistrate. Their camp was about three miles away from Mahad. Mr. Randive requested Maharaja to be with them in the camp that night. Maharaja had another doctor friend, by name Wamanrao Mathure, who was a devotee of Shri Rama. Maharaja went to him and requested him to accompany him to the camp as he had been invited there by Mr. Randive.

They started in the doctor's bullock cart and though the river Gandhari near Mahad was in floods they reached the camp by about 10 p.m. All persons in the camp were waiting for Maharaja for dinner. Among the camp there were some Brahmins and some Kayasthas also. Dishes of meat were served. Maharaja and the doctor protested that they were unaccustomed to such a meal and that they ought to have been served with vegetarian meals, along with other Brahmins. The Kayasthas who knew Maharaja began to joke and said that he being a Kayastha should not find anything unusual in the dishes and charged Maharaja that he was making an unnecessary show. Maharaja said that if they persisted, he would partake of any dish which was given to him. Maharaja then offered the food to God and lo ! The meat served to all was immediately transformed into a broth of "Vadas". All were struck with wonder. Some said it was jugglery and some that it was hypnotism.

(40) Mr. Randive- Mr. Randive who had invited Maharaja to the camp and who was originally of a believing nature was convinced of the greatness of Maharaja as a Saint and sent the same broth, as a Prasad to his family at Alibag and the wonder of it was that the broth remained unspoiled for eight or ten days.

Some days later Mr. Randive appeared for the higher standard examination of the Revenue Department. Before his writing the papers he

remembered Maharaja and he succeeded in passing the examination and later on became a Mamlatdar.

It is, however, sad to mention that although Mr. Randive got such decisive proofs regarding Maharaja's greatness as a Saint, some mischievous persons duped him into a belief that Maharaja was either a clever conjurer or a follower of the Aghora Panth (a system in which evil charms and Mantras are practised).

Mr. Randive fell a victim to these evil suggestions and as it were pawned his own reasoning power to the makers of these suggestions.

(41) At Mr. Raje's Place, Dhulia:- In 1924 Gajanana Maharaja went to Nasik to his relative Mr. Bhise. Mr. Damodar Martand Chitnis, a clerk in the Revenue Department was then at Nasik and he was initiated by Maharaja then. Maharaja then returned to Bombay and again went to Nasik after some days. Mr. Chitnis had then been transferred to Nandgaon. Maharaja, therefore, proceeded to Nandgaon to see him and stopped with him for two or three days. Mr. Chitnis wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, Mr. Raje, at Dhulia calling him to Nandgaon. Mr. Raje immediately arrived at Nandgaon and he had a discussion with Maharaja the whole night on spiritual topics.

Next day Mr. Raje requested Maharaja that he should accompany Mr. Raje to Dhulia. He said, "Please come with me to my place at Dhulia. Although personally, I have no very great faith in Saints as I consider that, that is not in my line, still my mother has great faith in Saints and she is extremely desirous, of taking the Darshana of Saints. So, please come with me for her sake."

Maharaja ultimately consented to go to Dhulia but said, that he would follow Mr. Raje two or three days later.

Accordingly Mr. Raje left for Dhulia and Mr. Chitnis two days later saw Maharaja off in the train at Nandgaon Station, I having purchased a ticket to Dhulia for him. Two or three days later, however, Mr. Chitnis received a letter from Mr. Raje that Maharaja had left for Bombay without giving previous intimation of his intention to any one in Mr. Raje's house.

In 1926 Maharaja went to Nasik from Bombay and thence to Dhulia. Mr. Chitnis received a letter from Mr. Raje that Maharaja was staying with him and that Mr. Chitnis should, go over to Dhulia to see him.

Accordingly Mr. Chitnis went there, met Mr. Saswadkar, Madhavrao Vaidya, Raosaheb Gupte and others there and returned to Nandgaon after stopping there for two or three days. This time Maharaja stayed in Mr. Raje's house for about 8 or 10 months, as all the members of Mr Raje's family acted very affectionately towards him. He passed these days there without any one knowing that he was a Saint. Mr. Raje also had not taken him to Dhulia as a Saint or Maharaja. Only he had said to Maharaja that his mother had got

initiation at the hands of Madhavnath Maharaja (another Saint well-known at the time) and that she would be very glad to see Maharaja. Through conversation it became known that Mr. Raje's mother had intimately known Gajanana Maharaja's mother and aunt and hence Maharaja stopped with Mr. Raje without any feeling of reserve or restraint. Mr. Raje is not a believer in any Saint. He, however, had a feeling of respect for Gajanana Maharaja for his sweet disposition, his pure conduct and his knowledge of spiritual matters and loved him like a brother.

(42) Gokul Ashtami Day :- On the Gokul Ashtami day of that year, Mr. Raje and all the members of his family were in the house. At about 10 or 11 p.m. Mr. Raje went to answer the call of nature and Maharaja was reclining on an easy chair in the verandah. Mr. Raje, while sitting in the latrine, felt the fragrance of hundreds of scented sticks entering his nose. He got a little afraid, came out, washed his feet and looked everywhere in the house. But he could not see whence the fragrant smell proceeded, which was still being felt by him. He came to the place where Maharaja was reclining on the easy chair. The smell was still there. Mr. Raje then awakened Maharaja and told him of it. Maharaja then laughed loudly and only remarked that he himself had been absorbed in a feeling of joy and that he could not explain it. All the members of Mr. Raje's family then came there. This incident, which has been described above, was lately narrated by Mr. Raje in the presence of Maharaja and others at Nasik. He also narrated several other miracles, a few of which are given below:-

On two or three occasions at about four or five o'clock in the early morning, all of a sudden there was spread everywhere an exquisite and almost celestial fragrance of flowers. Mr. Raje also observed on some occasions Maharaja's whole body besmeared with ashes and his forehead marked with sandal paste without any apparent physical cause. Maharaja, when asked about it, kept silent.

Although Mr. Raje saw these things with his own eyes, he had no faith and was not prepared to call anybody a Saint. However, these wonderful things actually happened and Mr. Raje told about them to one Mr. Saswadkar who was a Sub-Registrar there at the time, and also to Mr. Gandekar.

As Mr. Raje has published several books on Astrology, many educated men used to visit him. These persons found Maharaja sitting on a cot in the outer apartment. One day some of them asked Mr. Raje as to who the lame man was. It is not known what Mr. Raje told them. Next day, some of these persons said to Maharaja, "Maharaja, where do you generally stay?" To this Maharaja replied, I am neither a Saint nor a Maharaja. I am just like a member of Mr. Raje's family and have come to him as a guest. I am only a poor ignorant member of the Universal family of human beings. Some people call me Maharaja. This name has been given to me by others. My real name is Gajanana. I am a resident of Akola. For the present I am staying at Bombay with Mr. Nana Samartha, who is a friend and relative of mine. I am returning to Bombay in a week or so."

These persons, however, thought that Maharaja was purposely giving them evasive replies and said, "We have perfectly understood that you are a Saint." Upon this Maharaja said, "I do not know what has been told to you about me and by whom. I do not know anything else except the two letters which have been granted to me by my Sadguru. I have not the ability and worthiness to initiate any one. I myself am still a student. I also do things which are not done by others. I drink wine almost the whole day and night. What would be the use of such a Guru to you?" But the people were not convinced by this reasoning and persisted in their request that he should initiate them. Maharaja, therefore, granted to them the "Soham" Mantra, which had been given to him by his Sadguru Shri Narayan Saraswati. Two or three persons were initiated by him during this visit to Dhulia.

The persons who visited Mr. Raje's house were Raosaheb Gupte and Nanasaheb Gandekar Jahagirdar. This Nanasaheb Jahagirdar asked Mr. Raje as to who the lame man (meaning Maharaja) was. Mr. Raje took him for a walk and told him about Maharaja.

(43) Bukka Incident:- About three years ago Messrs. Raje and Saswadkar had come to Nasik. They then told about many miracles of Maharaja which had occurred at Dhulia. Mr. Saswadkar had also written a post-card and a letter from Dhulia to Mr. Damodar Martand Chitnis who was then a clerk in the Revenue Department at Peint in Nasik District, regarding the miracle of Bukka. This card and the letter were read by Mr. Vishwanath Gopal Vaidya and owing to this, this Bukka Incident was described in Guru Shishya Vijnana Deepika. [*A Marathi pamphlet in Ovi metre describing Gajanana Maharaja's life and his disciples' experiences*]. The following account of this miracle is based upon the above mentioned card and letter and also upon what was actually described by Mr. Saswadkar during his visit to Nasik with Mr. Raje, about three years ago. We give it below in the words of Mr. Saswadkar as far as possible.

"It was the month of Bhadrapada and the day was Anant Chaturdashi day, the last day of the Ganapati Festival. All of us had gone to the house of Mr. Sule, Pleader, at about 6 p. m. After seeing the "Melas" and Ganapatis there, we i.e. Messrs. Raje, Madhavrao Vaidya, Pradhan and myself went to the place of Mr. Pradhan and sat there casually talking about various matters. The talk turned upon Saints and miracles performed by them. Many miracles were described by the disciples as having been performed by certain so called saints and these saints were later on exposed in the newspapers as hypocrites and charlatans. Many educated people who also were of a believing nature were deceived by these miracles, which later on were proved to be false. I myself had seen a Sadhu in a village called "Prakasha" near Nandurbar in Khandesh District. Thousands of people were coming for his Darshan. But that Sadhu later on committed suicide and instead of life (Prakasha) spread darkness on the village. I remarked that I, owing to such instances, had no faith in any of these latter day saints. Shri Gajanana Maharaja was there and I said to Maharaja, why don't you say anything?" Maharaja said, "What can I say in the matter? Every one describes the things seen by him and the actions of saints observed by him. I am an ignorant

person. I do not do anything. I do not know Vedanta or its principles. I have no knowledge of books. There is, however, one thing (viz. the Supreme Brahman) which is beyond all these things. Old saints like Tukarama, Ramadas and Ekanatha and modern saints like Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Shri Gulabrao Maharaja and Shri Rama Maruti have pointed out the path of reaching that Supreme thing, Brahman, and of realising it within oneself. My Sadguru Mother has pointed out the same path to me and has given me the mantra of "Soham". If you ask me anything about it, I might be able to say something. If you people, however, begin raising fanciful doubts, the whole night might be spent without coming to any conclusion. If you say that all saints are hypocrites and all miracles are false, what sort of reply can I give?"

I said, "I do not mean to say that all saints are hypocrites and all miracles are false but I only say that in these days false saints predominate." Maharaja thereupon replied, "It may be so but it cannot be helped. If five or ten saints are true, there are hundreds of hypocrites who merely imitate these true saints and try to pass themselves off as true ones. Hence people are misled. Some married women elope, but have people on that account given up marrying? Accidents occur to railway trains, motors and aeroplanes. Have people on that account left off using those things? Similarly there may be many false saints but that does not mean that an aspirant on the spiritual path should not try to seek for a real Sadguru. I can only say that one should act carefully in the matter."

While Maharaja was speaking, my eyes had been fixed upon his face. I saw a halo of light encircling his face and then a shower of Bukka began to fall from above on the bodies, faces, coats of all persons sitting there, including Maharaja and also on the carpet there. Maharaja was crying out "Sadguru Narayan Maharajaki Jaya ! Ganapati Maharajaki Jaya !" All people were highly delighted. Mr. Pradhan then took Maharaja to the terrace, when Bukka fell on the head and body of Mr. Pradhan. He made Maharaja sit on a "Pata" (wooden slab) and gave him tea. All persons in the house then came upstairs and took the Darshan of Maharaja. Raosaheb Gupte also was there. All people took a little of that Bukka and kept it in a small "Dabi" (box), which was in the possession of some people up to four or five years ago. Then all people went away at about 11 p.m.

This miracle became known to many people in Dhulia. Maharaja, however, soon after this left for Bombay. He had stayed in Dhulia for about 10 or 11 months at that time. He requested that the miracle should not be made known to others as far as possible.

Next day Messrs. Saswadkar and Madhavrao Vaidya had been to see Maharaja and the following conversation took place.

Mr. Vaidya:- "Maharaja, I had asked some questions to one or two saints at Poona and one of them had said, ' We send various dreams to our disciples and also give them advice on spiritual matters. Those who act according to our orders are saved by us at the time of their death and after

death they are born again and become saints like ourselves and God actually speaks with them. But the disciple must have implicit faith in us and must freely give us whatever we ask for. If, however, he does not serve us properly, we never look to his welfare. Because we have to give a portion of our merit to the disciple and we many a time have to suffer from diseases for the sake of our disciples'. I and some of my friends agreed to follow the advice of the saint. We were told to write down the name of 'Rama' a lac of times on separate pieces of paper then roll each piece of paper in a pill of wheat flour and give these pills to fish to eat. If we would do this, we were told that we would get the Darshan of God. Another Saint told us, 'We save a disciple after his death. You should first try to make your minds pure and should take the name of God.' Another Saint said that his particular mission was to save women.

Maharaja pressed Mr. Vaidya to tell the name of the last mentioned Saint. He said that the name of that Saint was well known and that some time in future such false saints would be fully exposed in newspapers. Maharaja then said, "All right. What have I to do with his name? I must see that my own house is swept quite clean. It is true that one should have a discerning mind. What is not wanted is the tendency to raise unnecessary and baseless doubts and suspicions. If a spiritual aspirant has the real insight, he would not be deceived. You are like brothers to me. I shall try to explain to you in a few words what I think about these things. I too have many bad qualities in me. I do not find a single habit of mine which I think to be good. It is you who must really judge what is good and what is bad in me.

Many saints have flourished in past times, there are some living at present and there will be saints in the future also. All real saints have said that the source of real joy is in ourselves. In order to understand how to experience this internal joy of the soul, it is necessary to go to a Sadguru and act according to his instructions. If once you know the real path leading to this self experience, you can enjoy the bliss of self even though you may be leading a worldly life. If any Saint says that he has a special mission to save women only, he may be considered a specialist. Whatever a devotee asks for is granted to him by God. This Saint might have asked for such a boon from God and God might have granted it. Great Saints like Jnaneshwar, Tukaram, Ekanath, however, have said that they had come into this world to save all human souls and not women only. Female Saints like Mirabai, Muktabai, Janabai or Bahinabai did never say that they were in this world to save male persons only. Nothing like this has been mentioned in the lives of the ancient Rishis or in the Upanishads or in the Yoga Shastra of Patanjali. It appears that God has created such specialists among the present day Saints only. In the ocean of this worldly existence, I have been thrown like a log of wood and you call me a Saint. How am I then to shut your mouths? I tell you that I am not a Maharaja; still you persist in calling me Maharaja. You are simply besmearing a stone with a red paint and calling it a God."

Madhavrao Vaidya thereupon said, "Maharaja, is it ever necessary to gild gold? Can a real gem be hidden even in darkness? Can the fragrance of a rose or a champak flower or of musk be ever concealed?" Maharaja said, "What is the use of discussing such senseless questions? Every person will

get the fruit of his actions. Never again indulge in the censure of any saint. There might be sometimes among them a real Saint who has realised the highest bliss and you might be incurring sin in censuring him also among others." Madhavrao said, "I shall ask only one final question. Is it not the duty of parents to teach ignorant children?" Maharaja said that it has been prohibited by the Shastras to shake the faith of other people, ignorant though they may be. Madhavrao said that that did not hold good in the case of educated people. Maharaja asked Madhavrao whether he was ever deceived to which he replied that he had never been deceived although during the previous ten years he had taken the Darshan of many Saints and that he was sure that he would not be deceived in the future also. He added, "It is the mission of real Saints to teach wisdom to people. Great Saints like Tukaram, Ramadas, Eknath, Gulabrao Maharaja have written in severe terms of censure regarding hypocrites and false Gurus in order that ignorant people might not be misled. Were these great men not Saints? Then why did they criticise others? They really saw God everywhere. Then why should they have done so?" Maharaja said, "Madhav, you are wrong. Those great Saints had authority to do so. Such great personages have authority over the whole world. How would it be proper for us to imitate them? Sadguru has given me the shining torch of "Soham". I do everything in my mind, bath, Sandhya, Japa, etc. I sit among people and talk with them. Whatever good things I see in Saints or even in ordinary educated people of good conduct, I try to take a lesson from them and I sweep off myself whatever bad things there may be in my mind. I do not allow bad ideas to enter my mind again. I, however, cannot tell you why miracles occur at my hands, that they sometimes occur is true. Mr. Raje might have told you about many miracles which occurred here. But I do not know how they occur. I, however, feel sorry when they occur. I go into an ecstatic mood, I see light before me and the form of my Guru in that light, and then sometimes a miracle occurs which is observed by other people. I, however, attach no importance to miracles and pray that they should not occur.

Please go away now. I shall not come here again. If you want to see me, you will have to come to Parel, Bombay, when we shall talk further."

(44) Mr. Nanasaheb Gandekar :- From next day Nanasaheb began to come every day to Maharaja and to request that he should initiate him. In this manner seven or eight days passed. One afternoon he came and finding Maharaja alone pressed earnestly for being initiated. Taking into consideration Nanasaheb's respectability, advanced age and urgent desire, Maharaja conferred his grace upon him and later on also told him how to practise Dhyana Yoga. Before and after conferring his grace, Maharaja asked Nanasaheb several questions. The conversation which took place is briefly narrated below : -

Maharaja:- Have you been initiated by any Guru before?

Answer:- Yes, I was initiated by Belapurkar Maharaja, about ten years ago.

Maharaja:- What did he tell you to do and what did you do ?

Answer:- I was only repeating the Japa of the Mantra given by him. I got the advantage of his company for a long time.

Maharaja:- After that, did you go to any other Saint for “Upadesha”?

Answer:- I then remained for some time in the company of Shri Narayan Maharaja Kedgaonkar and began repeating the Japa of the Mantra given by him. I am doing so even now and am also contemplating and meditating upon Shri Narayan Maharaja's photo as told by him.

Maharaja:- Of how many Saints have you taken Darshan in Dhulia and taken “Upadesha” from ? After initiation from me, how many Saints would you seek out and receive initiation from? Are you going to continue your practice of seeking out Saints and taking their “Upadesha” for ever?

Answer:- As long as my mind does not become calm, I do not find peace and I do not obtain the gift of internal sight; what else can I do ? I must carry on my search of Saints until my desire is fulfilled.

Maharaja:- Have you ever seen Narayan Maharaja performing miracles and is it your idea that a person who performs miracles is a fit Sadguru for receiving initiation from?

Answer:- I have seen many miracles performed by Narayan Maharaja. Once he gave Prasad to us by taking out dishes of sweetmeats from a well. He also showed water of the Ganges coming out of the palm of his hand.

Maharaja:- What miracles of mine have you seen that you want to take initiation from me ?

Answer:- Mr. Raje has told me some things about you. I have been continuously coming to you for the last seven or eight days. I too feel a fragrant smell continuously. For a moment there is the smell of liquor immediately succeeded by the fragrance of incense. Next moment there is the fragrance of “Chameli” flowers. My mind, therefore, tells me that you must be and are a Saint of Self-realization.

Maharaja:- There appears to be a vast difference between taking out dishes of sweetmeats from a well and merely emitting a fragrant smell. You can at least fill your belly by means of sweetmeats. What is the use of mere fragrant smells?

Answer:- Please do not put me to a hard test. I am really an ignorant man. However, I know one thing that since I began the practice of meditation as directed by you, I am beginning to feel peace of mind. I shall relate to you one incident which will serve as a proof of your greatness. I had gone to Pandharpur with four or five of my friends. At that time there lived a Saint there on the bank of the Chandrabhaga River named "Tapkiri Buwa." He was so called because he used to take large quantities of snuff. He was very strong and stout in appearance. His arms were so long that they reached his knees. He had a long beard and he had no clothes except a piece of sack-cloth round his waist. He carried a "Zoli" (a square piece of cloth with the two ends on each side tied into a knot) hanging over his shoulder and arm-pit and had a tin-pot in his hand for drinking water. He observed silence and never talked with any one. When I saw him and bowed to him, however, he said to me, "A Saint will come to your place, Dhulia, but it would not be possible to recognize him as a Saint. I myself will come there in that Saint's form and will show you the right path and fulfil the desire of your heart." Hearing these words I was struck with awe and became as it were dumb and a feeling of great joy pervaded my heart.

(45) Shree Tapkiri Maharaja :- Maharaja was very glad to hear this and said,

Maharaja :- I had seen "Tapkiri Buwa" even before you saw him. I had gone to Pandharpur with Mr. Gupte, Pleader of Akola and his wife to the house of Mr. Gupte's son-in-law, who was an Excise Inspector there, as Mr. Gupte's daughter had given birth to a child. I used to call Mr. Gupte "Dada". On the next day I was going to the river Chandrabhaga to bathe. On the bank there was an old dilapidated temple and a Peepul Tree near it. "Tapkiri Buwa" was sitting there. I was going bare-footed and as it was the month of May, my feet felt a burning sensation. Mr. Raje, the Excise Inspector, had told me about a mad man who took too much of snuff and who wandered all over the town asking people for snuff. I felt that he must be a saint and had entertained a keen desire to meet him. This desire of mine was fulfilled when I saw him sitting under the Peepul Tree. I was very thirsty at the time and was feeling very uneasy. "Tapkiri Buwa" got up suddenly, ran to the river and brought back his tin-pot full of dirty water and said to me, "Drink, child." But I saw that the water was dirty and doubts assailed my mind. Then Tapkiri Buwa himself began to drink that water. What was my surprise when I found milk trickling down his beard? There was an instant revelation in my heart and I began to feel sorry that I had not accepted the drink. Tapkiri Maharaja then again gave me the same water which I drank and embraced the feet of that revered saint in an excess of devotion. He caught and pressed me to his breast and having strenuously rubbed the surface of my feet with his hand for a long time, said to me, "Now, Child, go

away.” It was a wonderful thing that I found that the burning sensation in my feet had altogether disappeared.

He then ran away and was never seen by me again. On that day Mr. Gupte was to return to Akola. It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon when I reached the house of Mr. Raje, Mr. Gupte's son-in-law. I could not find my way to the house and had to hire a tonga to get back to the house, which I succeeded in reaching after making various inquiries on the way. When, however, I reached the house I found that Mr. Gupte had already left for the station. I then went in the same tonga to the station, where I paid the driver after taking the money from Mr. Gupte.

It may be here mentioned that I had gone to Pandharpur at the expense of Mr. Gupte. The train was late on that day, otherwise I would not have met Mr. Gupte on the station also. I did not get any food to eat on that day and I did not feel any sense of hunger also because Tapkiri Maharaja had given me nectar to drink. It was owing to his grace that the train was late and I could meet Mr. Gupte on the station. Well, Jahagirdar, are you now convinced in your heart?

Jahagirdar:- There could not be the slightest doubt that Tapkiri Maharaja was a great Saint.

Maharaja:- I, however, am not Tapkiri Maharaja. I am the slave of the feet of all Saints and of you all. I look upon all as my Sadguru Shri Narayan Saraswati. If I see any Saint and he appears to me like my Sadguru, then I really consider him a Saint. Because it has been said by Ramdas that although Saints have separate bodies and hence appear different, still they are all united together in their union with the supreme spirit. You should, therefore, repeat with great faith those very Mantras which have been given to you by other Saints. I do not wish to mislead anyone. My path or method is different but all paths in the end merge into one. My Sadguru has conferred his grace upon me although I was unworthy and gave me the “Soham” Mantra. You should repeat that very “Soham” Mantra. You will, owing to it, obtain internal sight. You should continue in your devotion to your favourite Deity and to those Saints whom you have up to this time considered as your Gurus. You should come to me again when I shall tell you about the path of meditation (Dhyana Yoga), although I do not know it perfectly. You will then have your object accomplished. ,

Another of these persons who were initiated at Dhulia was Mr. Saswadkar, who was a Sub-Registrar there at the time. The account of his meeting with Maharaja and of how he got himself initiated is given below in his own words.

(46) Mr. Saswadkar:- I was transferred to Dhulia in 1926. Soon after that I got information that a great Saint, known as Gajanana Maharaja and who was a cripple, was putting up with Mr. Raje, who was a postmaster there. I also came to know that he came to be recognized as a Saint some months after he arrived at Dhulia, as he never gave any sign of his greatness and did not permit anyone else to praise him or to describe his greatness. His external appearance and his dress also belied the idea of his being a Saint. Whenever people came to see Mr. Raje, this saintly guest always left the place and went inside the house, where he sat alone.

Mr. Damodar Martand Chitnis, who was then a clerk in the Mamlatdar Kacheri at Nandgaon, had come up for a visit to his brother-in-law, Mr. Raje. I took Mr. Chitnis for a walk to the railway station. On the way I began asking him searching questions regarding the Saint. He, however, appeared extremely reluctant to answer them. I thought that Mr. Chitnis was reluctant to give any information regarding him because the external conduct, dress, talk and the habit of abusing indulged in by the personage were such that to describe him as Saint would provoke only ridicule.

I, therefore, told him a fib. I said, "Why are you not answering my questions? Only yesterday Maharaja himself told me that you know everything about him and that if asked you would give me all information about him. Then where is the objection?"

Then Mr. Chitnis began to speak and said, "I first met Maharaja in 1924 in Nasik. He had then come on a visit from Bombay to one of his relatives, Mr. Bhise, with whom I was on frequent visiting terms. In Bombay Maharaja stayed at Parel with Mr. Samartha. Mr. Mathure, who was the maternal uncle of Mr. Bhise's wife was also staying at Parel and had become his disciple. Owing to this, Maharaja occasionally visited Mr. Bhise at Nasik.

I asked various questions to Maharaja and pestered him with various doubts and objections. In the beginning he kept quiet but ultimately he showed as if he was angry and began to answer the questions. By taking worldly and homely illustrations he turned my mind towards spiritual matters and gave me an idea about what real happiness was. A few days later I got a dream in which I was told to go to Maharaja and take his Upadesha. I accordingly got myself initiated by him and I was shown the path of Dhyana Yoga. I saw various visions in which I saw light, various saints and experienced different kinds of fragrant smells and heard different sounds, such as those of bells, thunder etc. I also could see Maharaja himself in my state of meditation and in that state could know if Maharaja went anywhere in the physical world from one place to another. Later these visions began to disappear and I began to experience a state of extreme joy in which I was entirely unconscious of my body and which lasted sometimes for more than an hour. This is the present stage of my progress."

As by this time it was nearly 8 p.m. we returned and Mr. Chitnis went to Mr. Raje's house and I went home. I was feeling a little bit afraid as I had obtained all this information by telling a lie. Next day was a Sunday. Mr.

Chitnis came to me in the morning and said that Maharaja had taken him severely to task for having told me about him and that Maharaja had forbidden Mr. Chitnis to see him when he would be visiting Nasik, in short, Maharaja had been very angry with him. Mr. Chitnis appeared to be greatly troubled and said, "You told me a lie that Maharaja had asked you to get all information about him from me and hence I gave the information. I have now come into trouble for it. I was unwilling to give you any information regarding him as it was his desire that we should not say anything about him to others. He wants every thing left to the course of circumstances. Now-a-days almost all people want worldly happiness and they want saints who would grant them worldly happiness. They consider spiritual knowledge as all bosh and to spend time in trying to get it as mere waste of energy and a sure sign of future poverty and adversity. They want Saints who would give them wealth, children and worldly prosperity and they would bow down to such saints. They do not want spiritual happiness which they regard as chimerical. They want a life full of worldly pleasures. Hence Maharaja is known to-very few people. He alone would go to a real saint and ask for lasting happiness who has realised that all worldly pleasures are perishable and ultimately lead to misery. Really speaking poor and rich persons stand equally in need of real Saints who have attained self-realization. But who wants real Saints?"

Then I said to him, "Chitnis, please do not be angry. I asked you in the capacity of a friend and although I told you a lie I had no bad intention in doing so. Now-a-days many pseudo-saints are flourishing in this world and we see even educated and big persons falling a prey to their machinations. It has, therefore, become very difficult to recognize a real saint. I thereby do not mean to say that at present there are no real saints at all but if at all they are there, they are very rare. Newspapers and magazines are full of descriptions of such false saints and are warning people to beware of them. Still we find even learned men getting into the clutches of such false saints and offering their estates and even their wives to them by putting blind faith in their words. Instead of being thankful to the writers in newspapers and magazines, they on the contrary run them down as blasphemers of saints saying, "What do-they know? They do not admit the existence of God. How can they then believe in Saints? They do not want either God or Religion. They have no idea of what is meant by devotion. The only thing they can do is to spread scandals regarding saints and to increase the number of their subscribers.

"I asked you information so that I might not be deceived, because some of these false saints have some powers of hypnotism owing to which they produce an impression upon others and catch them in their snares. My only point is that genuine coins and counterfeit coins are mixed in the bazaar and it is the duty of every one to test the coin and find out whether it is true or false. I again request you not to be angry. If you know from your experience that Maharaja is a real saint, then where is the cause for anger. I fully believe what you have told me regarding him. But please remember that I will not rely simply on your words but shall try to find out the truth for myself, although I shall do so not in a spirit of fault- finding and opposition but in the spirit of a real seeker of truth."

Mr. Chitnis then gave me the additional information:-

“Gajanana Maharaja does not accept any worship from any one. He treats all equally, young or old, rich or poor. The mantra, “Soham”, which he gives is not to be repeated, keeping time with the incoming and outgoing breath. I, after some time, obtained the gift of internal vision and easily I went up to the Sahasradala. Maharaja for some days made me sit near him and practise meditation. Then he told me to practise at home and said that there was no necessity of going to him. He thus remains aloof even from those who have taken his “Upadesha” and hence it is that he has remained so unknown. If any one goes to him, he finds only two or three persons near him and hence no one can think him to be a saint or Maharaja unless he is specially told about him by somebody. I am, however, fully convinced that he is one of those very rare real saints, who have realised self for themselves and are prepared to show the path of self-realization to others. I cannot say anything further. I have read several letters written by some of his disciples to Maharaja, which contain a description of their spiritual experiences which they obtained after having fully tested the correctness of the path shown to them, by practice for a year or two. What more proof do you want? He has more disciples among Brahmins than among persons of our Kayastha Prabhu Caste and they are far advanced in their spiritual experiences.”

I then gave tea to Mr. Chitnis and accompanied him to Mr. Raje's house. Mr. Chitnis left the same night for Nandgaon. I, later on, personally asked Mr. Raje Post-Master about the Saint and Mr. Raie also told me everything that he knew about him. He said that he himself had no faith in modern saints but his mother being an aspirant on the spiritual path, he had brought Maharaja there. He personally liked Maharaja as his conduct was very pure, he was witty, humorous and mixed himself freely with children and there was nothing reserved or awe-striking about him. He never left the house and unless particularly questioned, rarely talked with any one.

After having obtained the above information I went to Maharaja in order to take his Darshan. He was then sitting on stool. He appeared to be a very lean man and his hands and feet appeared to be very weak and emaciated. I took his Darshan and asked him some questions. He, however, gave evasive replies.

He said, “I am a poor man. I go to anyone who invites me affectionately and is glad to receive me as a relative. I am a Fakir in mind and consider myself as an humble member of the Universal human family. I go wherever I am invited heartily and stop there as long as I please.”

I then began to visit him daily for about seven or eight days. Whenever he was in a joyful mood, he talked with me freely. I once said to him, “Maharaja, please do not be angry. When we, are sitting near you, occasionally we experience various kinds of beautiful smells. What is the use of exhibiting such miracles? I have heard that there are eight kinds of Siddhis (powers) which tempt a Yogi and interfere in his spiritual progress. Only those Yogis who are of an exceptionally strong mind are not tempted by these

Siddhis. They turn aside from them and steadily reach the highest goal. You, on the contrary, perform these miracles by using these Siddhis. How can it be then said that you have really accomplished Yoga? We too can go to the Bazaar and bring various kinds of highly scented attars or sweetmeats or other things. Whether you get these things by means of powers (Siddhis) acquired by practising Yoga in this birth or you get these things by means of money obtained in this birth as the fruit of merit done in previous births, the result is the same. I for myself attach no importance to these miracles. If a Yogi practises Yoga and penance for years together, obtains these Siddhis and gets himself entangled in them, I do not attach the slightest importance to him. Such Yogis ruin themselves and also others. Please excuse me if I have spoken too much. But is it not simply deceiving ignorant people? If I am wrong, please correct me and explain to me and satisfy my doubts. In all spiritual matters, in Yoga, in all the different religions, tenets and books, the only real thing that matters is experience. I have, read the works of many philosophers, the sayings of many saints such as Ramkrishna Paramahansa, books of Vivekananda, Jnaneshwari and Yoga Vasishta and tried to understand their meaning. I have nowhere found any importance attached to such miracles. Ancient sages also in explaining the characteristics of a Sudguru have always run down Yogis who indulge in miracles and have definitely warned people not to place themselves under the spiritual guidance of such miracle mongers. There is nothing secret in Raja Yoga or in the other Yoga paths and I am not prepared to believe any one who says that there is something secret or mysterious in Yoga. A real Saint or Yogi will never ask any aspirant on the spiritual path to put blind faith in him, without having shown him the path of at least a little self-experience.”

By talking in this manner I pestered Maharaja to a great extent. Raosaheb Gupte and Mr. Madhavrao Vaidya were then with me. Maharaja did not speak a single word but was smiling silently to himself, being greatly amused. We then went to our respective houses. All of us three were however greatly perturbed and became very anxious to know something further about Maharaja.

Next day we three again went there a little earlier. Maharaja appeared glad to see us and said, “My dear brothers, you have told me a great deal about Vedanta but I am an uneducated man and do not know anything about Vedanta. I have learnt only up to the second or third standard in Marathi. But what is the use of raising objections and arguments before me and making me non-plussed? I have not come here for exhibiting myself as a saint and for deceiving ignorant men and women by displaying miracles. Miracles are inherent in every one. They are not required to be procured from outside. If you practise meditation you also will be able to bring about such fragrant smells. When a person practises meditation, as his concentration increases these smells naturally come out. These experiences are got merely on the lower steps of Yoga. They only show that one is proceeding on the right path.

I casually got acquainted with Post-Master Mr. Raje and as I learnt that Mr. Raje's mother and my aunt knew each other from childhood, I have stayed here being pressed by Mr. Raje's mother to do so. Then why do you bother

me? What advantage or benefit do you get from it? There is another thing. If a person keeps a parrot and teaches it to speak and the parrot speaks cleverly, would you give real credit to that person or the parrot? It is obvious that real credit is due to that person. I say these arguments of yours are like words spoken by a parrot. You have read many books and shastras. Suppose I also tell you something and you merely listen to it. What benefit would you get from it? You repeat things learnt from books, but just as a parrot does not understand the meaning of the words he utters, similarly you do not understand the real meaning of what you say. It is all words and nothing else. Dear friends, I urge upon you to practise meditation and get actual experience. If after practising for some time you do not get any experience then say that everything is false. Real Saints would always urge upon you to get actual experience because they love all human beings heartily and sincerely. Tukaram has said, I cannot bear to see people sinking (in ignorance) and a feeling of tender pity rises in me." Such outbursts of feeling on the part of real saints would give you an idea as to how deeply they love all human beings and what great and keen interest they feel in their welfare.

Now you have seen certain miracles and have heard of others. But have you any personal experience regarding them? Absolutely nil. I tell you, my dear friend, that if the mind gets internal sight and is concentrated in meditation every person who practises meditation would, in the course of nature, feel such fragrant smells. There is absolutely nothing wonderful in this."

After this talk we all went home. Next day I again went to Maharaja accompanied by three or four others. At that time I had applied highly scented attar to my hands and dothes and had placed small pieces of cotton soaked in attar in my ears. Some other men also were then sitting with Maharaja. One of them said to me, "Well, Sub-Registrar Saheb, you have come besmeared with attar scent to-day. Do you celebrate your Diwali to-day?" I replied, "Maharaja gives out various fragrant smells. I thought I would do the same in respect of merely attar."

Upon this Maharaja remarked that he himself was not feeling the fragrance of attar but on the contrary the bad smell of ordinary oil. Other persons, on being told by Maharaja to do so, actually smelt my clothes and they too felt the smell of ordinary oil. Then a big laugh burst from all the people there. I alone felt a sensation of shame and immediately begged the pardon of Maharaja. All people then said to me, "If at all you want to test a Saint, it should be done with all humility. It is much better not to undertake such a difficult task. If we do not find our way to put faith in a Saint, we should salute him from a distance but should never find fault with him. Now this Maharaja is here for the last about eight or nine months, but very few people know about him. It does not appear proper to us that any one should try to test this great Saint. However, whatever has happened, has happened for the best." After this all persons went away.

(47) Attarwalla Incident:- One or two days later Gajanana Maharaja came to my place at about 9 a. m. and we both sat talking with each other. A

vendor of attars, who had been to Dhulia from Kanouj, came there. He had sold attars to many rich and big personages in the town and he had made a list of them. He showed the list to me and said, "I have come to you, having heard about you. You must buy at least "two or three tolas of attars". I said that I was not fond of attars and wanted to send him away but somehow I had to purchase attars from him worth two or three rupees. I then went inside for taking my bath. When I came out I heard some talk going on between the attarwalla and Maharaja.

The attarwalla said, "I never give samples gratis. Pay money and I shall give you a piece of cotton soaked in attar. My attars are not of an inferior quality costing eight or twelve annas per tola. I take eight annas for a small piece of cotton soaked in the attar."

Maharaja thereupon said, "I am a poor man, my good sir; merely apply a little attar to the back of my palm. I do not want a piece of cotton soaked in attar. Show me 'Hina' or 'Mogra' attar."

Still the attarwalla refused to show Maharaja samples. I then told the attarwalla to show samples to Maharaja. I had an idea that Maharaja would work some miracle. I, therefore, again pressed the attarwalla and said, "Do show your samples to him, he will purchase your attars."

But the attarwalla seemed to be an obstinate fellow and said "My attars are very costly. How can this gentleman purchase them?" Ultimately, however, he applied two different kinds of attar to Maharaja's hand. Maharaja asked him about the price of those attars. He said that it was Rs.10/- per tola but that he would give them at the same rate to him as he had given to me i.e. at Rs.8/- per tola. Maharaja then inhaled the smell of the attar and remarked that the smell was like that of ordinary oil which we use in our cooking for frying thing. The attarwalla got angry and began to talk at random. I then said to him, "You cannot understand the real worth of persons, just as some persons cannot understand the real worth of attars."

Maharaja then turned to me and said, "Bhausahab, pay this man five rupees and ask him to show samples of all his attars. Accordingly the attarwalla began showing the samples of all attars which he had with him. But every sample that was shown had the bad smell of ordinary oil. Even the costliest attars smelt likewise. The attarwalla himself and myself smelt the attars and both of us were convinced that what Maharaja said was true.

Then the attarwalla got frightened and he began to think that the man wearing the shabby coat was some great Saint. He then fell at the feet of Maharaja and prayed, for pardon. We then burst into a laugh. Maharaja said to the attarwalla, "I have done nothing in this matter. For all attars you use ordinary oil. At least I have heard that you do so. Hence the attars went back to their original form of ordinary oil. What is there to wonder at?" Maharaja, however, again transformed all his attars into their sweet-smelling state as before. That attarwalla did not come to my place again at Dhulia. He was a Mohammedan but dressed like a Hindu.

In 1933 when I was at Niphad I again met him, when he asked me, "Where is that Maharaja now who was with you at Dhulia?" I told him that Maharaja was then at Nasik. He then went to Poona for the purposes of his trade.

Mr. Saswadkar (*continued*) :- Since that time, however, I began to feel an extremely anxious longing for obtaining Maharaja's grace. Then Rao Saheb Gupte, Madhavrao Vaidya and myself consulted together and came to the conclusion that it would be very unwise not to get ourselves initiated by such a Saint, and it was agreed that next Thursday should be the day. Till then we used to visit Maharaja daily. As Maharaja is witty, we began to grow more familiar with him and the sense of awe which we had previously experienced almost wholly disappeared. Madhavrao Vaidya was the first to take Maharaja to his house. He was then stopping, in his fields situated at a distance of four to five miles from Dhulia. He had been an excise Inspector and afterward was carrying on some trade. He begged Maharaja's pardon for having taken part in and helped me in my attempt to ridicule Maharaja and having taken him to his house, garlanded him and got initiation from him. Immediately within a week Maharaja made him practise meditation which developed his internal sight and he could see wonderful things of the inner world such as the six plexuses and finally he was told to fix his attention on the heart centre and meditate there. He then began to see a light inside and saw many saints, shining deities, flames of fire proceeding from the Muladhar Chakra (plexus at the anus), stars, the sun and the moon and could hear various sounds, of thunder, bells, the dance of Shiva, flutes and conches. He himself described these experiences of his to me.

I was greatly delighted to hear all this and whatever doubts had been still lurking in my mind were entirely dispelled and I became full of repentance for having entertained doubts regarding such a Saint. Madhavrao Vaidya said to me, "Bhau Saheb, I feel I must have acquired great merit in my previous birth, as I have the good fortune of obtaining the grace of such a Saint, who not only has spiritual experiences himself but also can show them to others. Such Saints are very rare. Besides, Maharaja is absolutely selfless. Even the food which he takes is as small in quantity as that taken by a small child and he merely makes as it were a show of sitting for dinner. Some years ago Annasaheb Patwardhan of Poona had been here. He had told me that I should not be anxious and that I would get initiation at the hands of a great Saint. His prediction has been fulfilled. Having once put gold to test and accepted it, if a person tries to test it again and again thousands of times, the gold would become less and less and ultimately would dwindle away altogether.

Similarly when a Sadguru gives Upadesha, teaches how to practise meditation and the disciple gets experiences and his mind tastes the delights of calmness and concentration, it is the duty of the disciple to proceed along the path pointed out to him. Maharaja gave me these experiences and showed me the path. He then told me not to put my faith in him but in the things experienced by me.

Two or three days later Raosaheb Gupte and myself got ourselves initiated. Maharaja gave me the Mantra of "Soham" and told me to practise meditation. He conferred the grace of internal sight upon me and I began to see various wonderful visions in the internal world. For a year or two I continued practising meditation according to my convenience and leisure. I then began to feel calmness of mind and a sensation that the Japa was proceeding from all parts of my body. At any time the Japa would automatically proceed. Sometimes I felt someone giving me pushes while I was sleeping and asking me to carry on the Japa.

After a pretty long time had passed in this manner and after Maharaja had gone back to Bombay, I communicated to him all my experiences by means of letters. I wrote to him saying, "A yellow flame started from the Sushumna nerve and went up to the Sahasradala (plexus at the centre of the brain) and then a dazzling light was seen having the accumulated splendour of many suns. Then mountains, rivers, fog, moonlight, the moon, the sun and flames of fire, saints and various deities were seen. Some days later sounds of the tabor, guitar, jingling of small brass plates etc., began to be heard. After that there was such a terrible sound of a conch that I became terrified and my head became stunned. When I left off meditation my whole body became so full of perspiration that I had to rub it with a towel.

Two or three years later I personally went to see Maharaja and mentioned all these experiences to him in the presence of some of his disciples, who jotted them down. I then asked the following questions to Maharaja.

"These visions which are seen during meditation are also sometimes seen in dreams. What is the difference between the two?" Maharaja replied, "Things seen in a dream have no lustre, that is to say they are not of light but things seen in meditation are full of light and are really made of light. Brahman is just behind these appearances. Hence when all these appearances disappear, what remains behind is pure bliss. Although these appearances are not real things still they are external manifestations of the real thing. This was the path followed by all the great Saints like Jnaneshwar, Tukaram and Ramdas and by all the ancient Rishis. This was the path which was pointed out to me by my Guru and the same path has been shown by me to you. All these appearances are as it were sign-posts on the way leading towards the highest goal Brahman. When they disappear, the person practising meditation enters the state of Samadhi. This is the real experience in Rajayoga. If you are prepared to say that all those old Saints were fooled by hallucinations, then suppose me to be one of those fools. I, however, am still a student. Even though you may call me Siddha (one who has attained perfection), it will have no effect upon me."

In this manner Maharaja solved my doubts. During the last two or three years, all visions have disappeared and while I sit in meditation even the Japa stops and for the space of an hour or an hour and a half, I remain in a state of pure joy without any thoughts or ideas. Since then the whole tendency of my

mind has been changed and I feel a sort of peace pervading everywhere. I feel as if the whole world is inside me. In this state of peace the Atma-Rama inside (the real self) appears to repeat the Japa of "Soham" and I as it were am only listener. I think this is what is known as Atma-Prachiti (self-perception) and Shashtra-Prachiti (perception obtained from Shastras). I can only say, Glory be to my Sadguru I who has made me realise these things in myself. Om ! Peace ! peace !.

(48) Maharaja's Fever :- While Mr. Saswadkar was a Sub-Registrar at Niphad, Gajanana Maharaja had once been on a visit to him there in the year 1931 or 1932. Maharaja since 1926 had been staying at Nasik with his relative Mr. Bhise and from Nasik he had gone to Niphad. One day Mr. Karnik, a doctor in Government Service while on tour, had put up with Mr. Saswadkar. Maharaja got fever on that day and the doctor made use of his thermometer in order to ascertain the degree of fever. The mercury in the thermometer rose to 110 degrees. The doctor received a shock and he became nervous. Maharaja, however, told him not to be afraid but the doctor immediately left the house. Maharaja laughed to himself and kept quiet. At about 10 p.m. Mr. Saswadkar returned home. It is not known what conversation had taken place between Mr. Saswadkar and the doctor but Mr. Saswadkar said to Maharaja, as soon as he came home, "Maharaja, you have some trick of making all doctors ridiculous." Maharaja replied, "I do not understand what you are saying. I do not know what happened."

Then Maharaja returned to Nasik a day or two later. Mr. Kanik is at present at Thana.

(49) Restoring the Ashes : Bala Maharaja :- In May 1928 when Mr. Saswadkar was a Sub-Registrar at Talegaon Dhamdhere in Poona District, Maharaja accompanied by Mr. Nana Samartha and Bala Maharaja Ramshejkar went to him on a visit. There is a holy place by the name of Vithal Vadi at a distance of about ten miles from Talegaon and one day Mr. Saswadkar took his guests there in a bullock cart. Mr. Saswadkar gave a bath to Maharaja in the river there and Mr. Nana Samartha similarly gave a bath to Bala Maharaja. He also washed Bala Maharaja's "Zoli" (a square piece of cloth with the two ends on each side tied into a knot, used by Sadhus to keep their things in) in the river without noticing what it contained. That "Zoli" contained sacred ashes and sundry other articles belonging to Bala Maharaja.

All these things had gone away into the river Bhima and the "Zoli" was clean washed, dried and handed over to Bala Maharaja who felt very sorry for the loss of his sacred ashes as he wanted to besmear his body with ashes after his bath.

Bala Maharaja said, "Maharaja, what is this? Mr. Saswadkar and Mr. Samartha did not care to see what was in my "Zoli" and have thrown away the things in it; specially I am sorry for the sacred ashes." Maharaja said, "Don't worry, these people have no sense. I, however, ask you why you are so much upset. Why don't you ask your favourite deity 'Datta' to give the things back to you? You have for such a long time served your God faithfully on the hill

known, as Ramasheja. Will he not take pity on you? And now you are actually sitting in the temple of Siva, who is fond of these ashes. All right. Tell me how much ashes you want. Do you want a sackful or only as much as your "Zoli" will hold? Because that much will suffice you for about two or three months."

In the meanwhile Messrs. Saswadkar and Samartha came to that temple of Shiva where Gajanana Maharaja and Bala Maharaja were sitting and they heard most of this conversation. This temple was very small and dilapidated, situated on the bank of the Bhima. It was about 1 p.m. then. Gajanana Maharaja said, "Oh Samartha and Saswadkar, how is it that you have no sense at all? You have thrown away the sacred ashes of Bala Maharaja contained in the "Zoli! Then Saswadkar and Samartha begged the pardon of "Shri Gajanana Maharaja and Bala Maharaja and fell at their feet. Bala Maharaja said, "What is the use of all this talk? Give me ashes to besmear my body." Gajanana Maharaja again asked him how much he wanted, a sackful or as much as the Zoli would hold. Bala Maharaja then got a little irritated and said, "You are simply talking and talking. You have not as yet produced ashes as much as would be held in two fingers. You simply talk about devotees and their Gods You have also taunted me about my penance and asked me to invoke my deity." There was a great laugh at this and Gajanana Maharaja said, "Bala Maharaja, please do not be angry. I do not possess the merit of penance, I have no soul-force, I have no knowledge of spiritual or worldly matters. I am simply a sweeper at the door of Saints and my duty is to do menial work there. I only take a dose of "Soham" and that suffices for me. Oh Datta, run for my assistance, run for my assistance and give ashes to my friend Bala Maharaja here."

With these words Gajanana Maharaja put his hands near the Pindi and took out successively handfuls of ashes and began to besmear the bodies of Bala Maharaja, Samartha, Saswadkar and of himself. Then he stopped and Bala Maharaja fell at the feet of Shri Gajanana Maharaja and asked his pardon, saying "I am your child, kindly pardon me for my mistakes." Then Gajanana Maharaja and Bala Maharaja embraced each other and then the cart was ordered to be yoked and all started from that place at about 2 p. m.

On the way they saw a garden of orange trees. They got down there, purchased some oranges and ate them and drank cool water of the well there. Gajanana Maharaja remarked, "It is worth observing how wealth and women lead to ruin. If we leave Brahmajnana (knowledge of the Supreme Self), devotion of God and detachment aside, it is difficult to say in this world what virtue is or what constitutes vice. If fortune is favourable, a man of originally bad disposition becomes virtuous so far as his worldly actions are concerned. If, on the contrary, fortune is unfavourable, even a person of originally virtuous disposition sometimes does questionable actions. But one thing appears to me to be clear. Just as gold, even though thrown into dust, does not become dirty, similarly the virtues of a really virtuous man, even though he may be undergoing adversity of fortune are sure to spread their lustre all around and attract the attention of other people." (These remarks, which appear to be uncalled for and unconnected with any previous topic, we think, were made in reply to the thoughts of Bala Maharaja).

They then started again and reached Talegaon Dhamdherc at about 9 p.m. Gajanana Maharaja, Samartha and Bala Maharaja then went to Bombay, whence Bala Maharaja returned to Ramasheja where he is stopping even now. This Ramasheja is a hill at a distance of about seven or eight miles from Nasik and it is believed that Shri Ramachandra had rested there for some time.

(50) Mr. Karkhanis:- The following incident took place at Niphad on the 22nd of April, 1932. There was one gentleman named Ganpatrao Karkhanis who was about sixty two years old. He had taken Upadesh from a Saint at Yeotmal about thirty five years ago. When Shri Gajanana Maharaja visited Mr. Saswadkar, Sub-Registrar at Niphad in 1932, this Ganpatrao Karkhanis came there for Maharaja's Darshana. He mentioned his initiation, at the hands of the saint of Yeotmal and said, "I have been repeating the Japa given to me and have been also practising meditation for the last so many years. Still I have not attained peace of mind. Please therefore take me under your protection and confer your grace upon me.

Maharaja in the beginning warded him off by evasive replies. Mr. Saswadkar urged Maharaja to confer his grace upon Mr. Karkhanis but Maharaja abused him and told him not to meddle in the affair. Finally, however, Maharaja asked Mr. Karkhanis to sit in the Padmasana posture before him and to repeat the Japa given by his Guru in his mind and placed his hand on Mr. Karkhanis's head. Immediately Mr. Karkhanis went into the state of Samadhi and for an hour he remained motionless. Maharaja then shook him and beat him, when he opened his eyes. His eyes had become very red and hot tears were flowing continuously from them. He said, "I have today understood what is meant by the bliss of self. Please continue to shower your grace upon me in this manner." Maharaja gave him his blessing and again made him sit for ten minutes more. He then could actually get the Darshana of his old Guru. Maharaja then told him to carry on practice of meditation in the manner shown to him. Mr. Karkhanis then returned home. Messrs. Gadkari and Patankar, Pleaders from Bombay, were there at the time. These pleaders left for Bombay the next day. This incident was narrated by Mr. Saswadkar who was an eye-witness.

(51) Wine Incident :- Some years after the conversation with Mr. Mathure regarding drinking took place, the following incident happened in the year 1930 or 1931 while Maharaja was staying with Mr. Nana Samartha at Parel. Maharaja once brought a big bottle of wine and placed it on the table in the room. He was drinking from it since morning and nearly half of the bottle had been consumed. He then consumed the remaining half also. He brought another big bottle and having placed it on the table before him, kept looking at it and pouring abuses through his mouth. The abuses were so vile that even a "Mawali" would not utter them. People in the house thought he was abusing them but they waited to see what happened further. If it led to bad consequences they were thinking of severing all connection with him. All neighbours had collected there and the people in the house thought that they were losing their good name through their connection with Maharaja.

It is really a thing to wonder at, that although these, people were connected with Maharaja for the last fifteen or sixteen years and had got several experiences showing the greatness of Maharaja, still within a very short time such bad thoughts began to pass through their minds. They chained the door of the room from outside and began to peep through the chinks to see what Maharaja was doing inside. Maharaja was sitting on the bed-stead in a posture of meditation and was steadfastly looking at the bottle on the table and a ceaseless flow of abuses was pouring out of his mouth. His eyes were red and he appeared greatly excited. Besides for the last four or five days he had not taken even a particle of food.

He suddenly got up and with great force dashed the bottle on the ground. It broke into several pieces and the whole quantity of the wine inside was spilt on the ground. Some of the pieces of the bottle hit Maharaja and he was wounded in several places. People then got terrified and opened the door and said to Maharaja, "Deva Mama (he was so styled by the Samartha family), what is this?" They lifted him up and placed him on the bed-stead. He then appeared to be in a state of excessive joy, such a joy that people had never noticed him before to be in. He laughed loudly and said, "Friends, today I have obtained victory over Shakti. For the last so many days I was trying to vanquish Her, but She was seducing me and trying to persuade me into thinking that She would help me in accomplishing my object. Today I have succeeded in putting Her to rout and having gone ahead of Her, I secured for myself everlasting joy."

The whole room which was up to this time reeking with the bad odour of wine became suddenly filled with the sweet fragrance of various kinds. Some felt the smell of scents, some of incense, some of lavender and some of scented sticks. In short every fresh person arriving there felt a different kind of fragrance. Two pieces of broken glass had hit Maharaja on his feet which were bleeding and one piece had hit him on the face near the eye and made a wound there. All the pieces of glass were collected and thrown away and in a day or two Maharaja's wounds also were healed.

All the people then began to ask Maharaja's pardon, whereupon Maharaja laughed and all felt glad. Since then Maharaja left off drinking altogether and only is taking the wine of "Soham" continuously. He is himself enjoying the bliss of self and is teaching his disciples and aspirants how to make progress in the spiritual path without leaving worldly life, in a natural and easy manner without tribulations to the body, only following a course of practice suitable to every one's capacity.

Maharaja is passing his days in joy and peace. He is calm, witty, affectionate and acts towards all like a friend. He does not give any sign of his greatness. He has no sense of pride and acts equally with all, young and old, rich and poor, of high or low caste. He acts towards an individual in consonance with the trend of ideas of that individual. If any one is wrong, he sometimes even quarrels with him but in that case the fault lies with that individual. Just as we see our own face in a mirror, similarly Maharaja is as it

were mirror reflecting the ideas of those who go to him. Only after great and minute observation for a long time one can come to know Maharaja and to realize that he is not what he seems.

Maharaja says, "I have never made any enemy since my birth. One is really one's own enemy. Instead of doing ill to my enemies, if any, I have always kept them near me. They are useful in trying to dispel one's own bad thoughts. Every one has such enemies. If others act like me and try to obtain real experience, they too would experience joy like myself."

It has been told of Saint Namdeva that in his early life he was a robber and used to plunder and molest pilgrims coming to Pandharpur. Valya Koli, too, used to commit murders and robberies. After a murder was committed, he used to throw a piece of small stone in a big earthen jar. In this manner, seven big earthen jars were filled with such small stones. He, however, had no idea that he was committing sin. But his whole life was changed by the grace of his Guru Narada and he later on became the great sage, Valmiki.

Similarly Gajanana's Guru showered his grace upon Gajanan and enabled him to gain victory over Shakti and after that Gajanana slowly came to be known as Maharaja and when various persons got various spiritual experiences through his grace, people began to be convinced of his greatness. Maharaja was not drinking wine in the early years of his life. If he had remained like that, his fame as a Saint would have spread far and wide. When, however, he began to drink, he openly used to ask for wine. It shows that a real Yogi would never mislead people. If he does not positively do any good to others, he at least would never do any harm to them. He would always try to do good to others as far as possible.

Otherwise, during his long stay in Bombay, Maharaja, if he had meant, could have amassed great wealth for himself and built bungalows and great buildings by misleading people and creating an impression of his own greatness upon them but he has never up to this time deceived any one or obtained money from any one under false pretences. Even his bitterest enemy would never charge him with having done so. At the most he would say that Maharaja drinks wine and sometimes abuses others. But has Maharaja any enemy? Maharaja himself has no ill feeling towards any one. How then can there be any enemy? If, however, any one has any ill feeling towards him, Maharaja says that, that person would suffer from his own bad feelings. Saints can never be any one's enemies. They are always enjoying bliss of self even though, enveloped in this mortal coil of the human body.

Maharaja says, "I have never upto this time worn the garb of a Sadhu or asked any one to be my disciple. On the contrary I tell people not to come to me unless I call them. I am always taking the wine of "Soham" and thus I have been spoilt. You people should not spoil your lives by following me. If at all any one wants to spoil his life as I have spoiled mine, he should with open eyes and confidence in himself accept this dose of the "Soham" wine and then live in the bliss of his own self. I may perhaps be appearing like a Saint to you at present. But who knows what is in my destiny in the future? My conduct may not perhaps remain pure as at present. I have up to this time never

entertained any ill-feeling towards any one and will never do so in future. If you really love me, I too would love you firmly and my love would never change. If any disciple of any other Guru comes to me, I never mislead him into thinking that he would get more benefit from me. If one Guru has not been of much use, so would be the case with any other Guru. Thus though at present my conduct is such, still I cannot guarantee that it would always remain so. I however would pray to God that it should not change but remain as it is, but it entirely lies in His hands whether to grant my prayer or not. My own lost treasure has been discovered by me through my Guru's grace. There is a song composed by a well-known Saint (Devanath) to the following effect:-

“I alone know that I have obtained the collierium of Guru's grace (i.e. obtained the gift of inner sight);

“I alone know that I have been made to drink of the cup of immortality;

“I alone know that all form has become submerged in my own self, and

I alone know that I myself am the Guru and also the disciple.”

(52) Meningitis Case:- In 1934 in Mr. Bhise's house at Nasik, Mr. Appasahob Vaidya, Mr. Walawalkar and one or two others were sitting talking with Maharaja, when Maharaja suddenly exclaimed, “He is lying ill on my bedstead in my room in my house. I must go to Parel.” As no letter or telegram had been received from Parel regarding anybody's illness, people were wondering about Maharaja's sudden exclamation, when to the surprise of all a telegram was received from Parel that Shankar, the nephew of Mr. Samartha, was seriously ill and requesting Maharaja to start immediately.

Maharaja started by the first train available, which was in the afternoon and reached Parel in the evening. Children of the family came running to the place where Maharaja's motor had stopped crying aloud, “Deva Mama has come.” Maharaja made inquiries with them regarding the illness and then went upstairs. Shankar being almost unconscious did not recognize Maharaja at first but after some time did so. Doctor Dabholkar was the family doctor of Mr. Samartha. He was a very good man, benevolent and successful in his profession. In the beginning the “case could not be properly diagnosed as it was the first case of “Meningitis” in Bombay. It was only after four or five days since the illness had begun, when the patient showed signs of delirium, that proper diagnosis was arrived at. Shankar was examined by a committee of doctors consisting of Doctors Bharucha, Mulgaonkar and Mistry, all M.Ds. Neighbours and relatives and friends were coming morning and evening to see how the patient was going on. Every day about forty to fifty persons visited. Shankarrao was a store-keeper in the office of the Times of India and people from his office also used to come for making inquiries regarding him. Nearly a month passed, during which doctors were paying their visits. Religious ceremonies such as Japa and other things were also performed. Whatever was suggested by any one was done.

Maharaja with his own eyes saw Shankar only twice or thrice in the beginning and last when his critical time came. Outsiders began to ask the members of the Samartha family, "What has your Maharaja to say about the illness?" To which they replied, "Maharaja is always abusing. We have stopped talking with him. We only know that everything depends upon his grace."

In this manner two months passed and still there were no signs of any improvement in the patient's condition. The eyes of the patient became swollen and there was puss in his ears and he began to stammer incoherently in English, Urdu and Gujarati languages. The fever was 103 or 104 degrees continuously. Shankar's superior officer had told all clerks to make inquiries regarding his health every evening and give him a detailed report next morning. The officer had sent a message to Nana Samartha, Shankar's uncle, that he would remove Shankar to the Hospital and arrange for his special treatment there. The officer himself then came with his wife to see Shankar but Shankar could not recognize him. The officer felt very sorry and after seeing Shankar's condition was convinced that Shankar would not live for more than five or six days. He, therefore, left, thinking that it was useless to remove him to the Hospital.

(53) The Critical Time:- Next day Shankar saw a vision which he afterwards described as follows :-

"I saw a black Yama Duta (Messenger of Death) putting his snares round my neck. There was a funeral pyre burning nearby and a widow was ceaselessly crying. I myself was also crying loudly and shouting "Oh Deva Mama, Deva Mama, save me, save me" Then somebody went and brought Shri Gajanana Maharaja near me. He saw me crying and said, 'Do not cry, from tomorrow you will feel better.' Still I could not be consoled. Then he told me to repeat "Soham" continuously. I began to do so with my eyes shut."

At this time almost all people had gone away. Only four or five persons were sitting near Shankar's bed and were continuously burning camphor near the head of the bed. That night camphor worth rupees two or three was burnt. Shankar began to speak and said, "Have all run away? I see here a big snake and Shri Krishna upon it, who has placed his hand upon my head. See they have gone." All felt glad at hearing this. Since that night Shankar's fever began to subside slowly. Three months later he became all right and regained his former strength. He then joined his service.

(54) Mr Upadhy:- Mr. Vithal Pandurang Upadhye, a leader of Nasik, has been on terms of friendship with Maharaja for the last several years. Mr. Upadhye is a man of very peaceful temperament and is very social. He has a knack of explaining the principles of Vedanta in a simple and easy manner. He is also very fond of reading. About two or three years ago on the second day of Divali in the evening, there were many persons sitting chit-chatting in the hall in the house of Mr. Saswadkar Sub-Registrar, who was then staying at Nasik. Maharaja was also there. Mr. Upadhye said to Maharaja, "Maharaja, you make many people sit in meditation near you almost daily. Here is Mr.

Baba Satpurkar who has a great desire to sit in meditation. Why don't you ask him to do so? He is waiting for a long time hoping that you would grant this favour to him.

Maharaja thereupon said, "Vakil Saheb, you also have made great preparation in your previous birth and even now you must be practising Yoga to some extent, because you have received grace from your Guru. Notwithstanding all these facts and although you have been in my company for so many days, have I ever asked you even casually to sit in meditation? I have never done so up to this time. But it appears that the opportunity has come today. Instead of asking me to make others sit in meditation, why don't you yourself sit before me?"

As soon as Maharaja said this Mr. Upadhye suddenly got up and sat before Maharaja and the wonderful thing was that he became completely absorbed in meditation with his eyes open. For nearly an hour and a half he had no consciousness of his body. People called out his name, then shook him and tried various other means of bringing him back to consciousness but they were of no avail. His whole body had become stiff like a piece of wood. He regained consciousness after about an hour and a half. Immediately he drank two lotas of water and again lay down reclining himself. He was still in a trance like dreamy state of joy. He did not speak for about twenty minutes more. Maharaja also called out to him several times but he could not utter any words. He only made signs with his hand asking Maharaja to stop for some time. After about fifteen minutes he got up. At that time Maharaja was sleeping. People asked Mr. Upadhye regarding his experience and he gladly gave the following description:-

"In the beginning the tip of my tongue turned inwards and pressed itself on the uvula in the throat and there was a slight checking of the breath and my eyesight became drawn upward internally, I saw the Sudarshana Chakra at the centre between the eye-brows. It was whirling round and a light similar to that of fire-works or of electric lamps appeared. Then I saw flames near the navel region and felt that the whole of my body was burning. I tried to come upwards but it was of no use and I again went downwards. Then I began to feel very cool and then again hot I then came upwards and as I proceeded upwards I began to feel cooler and cooler until I felt I was drinking nectar dropping down in drops from the uvula in the throat. Its taste was so sweet that I cannot describe it in words. It cannot be compared with any other taste. It has been written in works on Yoga Shastra that some Yogis can drink this nectar. I got actual experience of this and hence I am extremely delighted."

While Mr. Upadhye was describing his experience, Maharaja was sleeping. He got up and said to Mr. Upadhye, "Oh Vithal, Oh Pandurang, left me also understand what you saw, so that I too might share in the joy. One does not tell such experiences to others. Everyone has got this in himself and he can experience it in him- self. Owing to merit acquired in previous births, if a disciple carries on practice as ordered by his Guru with firm faith and disinterestedness, he becomes fit for treading the path leading to the highest

goal, although he may be leading a worldly life. He becomes submerged in joy "within himself."

Then Mr. Upadhye again described his experience to Maharaja and said, "Maharaja, if you had not slept, I would not have been able to regain consciousness soon." All people then got up and went to the river Godavari for a walk.

Next day when Mr. Upadhye came to Maharaja, he said. "Maharaja, yesterday I reached home with great difficulty because waves of that joy were again and again overflowing me and I was afraid whether I would fall down." He then again described his experience of the previous day to some other people who were then sitting near Maharaja at the time. As Mr. Upadhye has read various works on Vedanta and has also thought a good deal over spiritual matters, he could describe his experiences graphically and in an understandable and easy manner.

(85) Paralysis Case of Mrs. Gupte :- Rao Saheb Shankar Sitaram Gupte, a retired Engineer has been connected with Maharaja since 1926 when he received initiation from Maharaja at Dhulia. His wife Mrs. Anandibai Gupte also had received initiation from Maharaja. Recently Mrs. Anandibai Gupte was suffering from Paralysis for about 6 or 7 months and was confined to bed.

Raosaheb Gupte has been staying at Nasik since 1927 with the object of getting the benefit of Maharaja's company. But somehow or other he never thought of taking Maharaja to his house, as, perhaps he did not like to give trouble to Maharaja regarding his worldly affairs and thought that one must try to bear one's own afflictions sent by fate. Medical treatment of his family doctor Mr. Mauskar, however, was going on.

One day, however, Raosaheb Gupte casually said to Maharaja, "I am tired of giving doctor's medicines to my wife. It would be better if you will kindly come over to my house and give her your blessing." Maharaja replied, "Only doctors can cure such diseases. You ignorant people wish them to be cured by the blessings of Saints. Of course the blessings of Saints can accomplish anything. But I am not a saint of that sort. If I could cure diseases, why should I not be able to cure my own? As you know, in a month, I am generally ill and suffering for nearly twenty days. Your wife is now about sixty years of age. Such ills of the body are quite natural."

Although Maharaja said this and Raosaheb Gupte thought that the matter would rest there, Maharaja suddenly changed his mind and agreed to accompany Raosaheb to his house.

Maharaja then went to Raosaheb Gupte's house and told his wife to stand up. He held her hand and made her stand up and said, "Meditate, while standing, upon that upon which you meditate every day. Direct your mind upon all your senses and carry on the Japa." Mrs. Anandibai Gupte thereupon felt greatly delighted as she had not got the Darshan of Maharaja for eight

months although he was staying in the same town and she felt that the Great God Himself had brought about this meeting with Maharaja. She then did as she was told to do by Maharaja and then could move a few steps. This was repeated two or three times during the period of two or three hours. She then could go into the inner house and again come out. Maharaja then returned home. In a day or two more she became all right as if she had never suffered from paralysis. When the Doctor who was treating her, came to know about this, he was also very glad and surprised.

(56) Mr. Bhave:- Mr. Bhave, a retired electrical engineer, was, after his retirement, staying at Nagpur, where he had built a house. He is a Konkanastha Brahmin of good family and was working in the Engineering Branch of the Telegraphic Department. Owing to merit acquired in previous births, he got the Darshana of many great saints during his travels. Owing to this and to his own likings, he was following the path of Karma (action such as worshipping Gods etc.). His conduct is pure, he has firm faith in God, he has good knowledge of Vedanta and he has studied spiritual matters. He is witty, a little impatient and gets easily excited. But Sattva quality is predominating in his nature, which over-shadows all other things. Hence although he himself talks much, he also listens to what others have to say and thinks over it and if he finds that he himself is wrong, he has the candour to admit his mistake. He has not the perversity of maintaining that he alone is right as some Vedianis have. Mr. Bhave had a close connection with Shri Gulabrao Maharaja for about 14 years. This close company of such a great personality was sure to be greatly beneficial and was bound to lead to the purification of mind. Mr. Bhave for the last six or seven years is stopping in Panchavati, Nasik, as a tenant in the Shringeri Math of Shri Shankaracharya. As he has a liking for spiritual matters, he had been going to Shri Upasani Maharaja of Sakori for nearly 5 years at the instance of Mr. Bhagwat who also was visiting Sakori for about ten years. Mr. Bhagwat retired from service about two or three years ago. He was a Superintendent in the Telegraph Department at Bombay. Mr. Bhave wrote to Mr. Bhagwat at Poona regarding Shri Gajanana Maharaja and asked him to come over to Nasik. Accordingly he came to Nasik and received 'Upadesha' from Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Mr. Bhave had received Upadesha from Maharaja about 6 months previously. Mr. Bhave through having come in Contact with Shri Upasani Maharaja, had been doing various religious practices such as Sandhya, Bhajan, Worship, Repeating holy hymns etc. But he had not obtained peace of mind.

In November 1937 Mr. Bhave got information of Shri Gajanana Maharaja through one of his friends, who was stopping at Kalyan. Mr. Bhave received a letter from that friend expressing his wonder as to how Mr. Bhave did not know anything about Shri Gajanana Maharaja who was also staying at Nasik and urgently pressing him to make inquiries and go to Maharaja. Mr. Bhave received successively two or three letters from the same friend to the same effect and then only his curiosity was aroused and one day Mr. Bhave found out the house of Maharaja and went there at about two o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Bhave saluted Maharaja who asked him about his name etc. and as to how he happened to come there. Mr. Bhave mentioned everything in detail unreservedly and said, "Maharaja, teach me Yoga and take me under

your protection.” Maharaja at first tried to wave him off by talking inconsistently but as Mr. Bhavé continued to come successively for some days, he ultimately conferred his grace upon him.

Before Mr. Bhavé got initiated there was a talk regarding Upasani Maharaja. Shri Gajanan Maharaja said, “You may do those things also which were told to you by Shri Upasani Maharaja because he is a Saint. I am not a Saint. I have told you something in the capacity of a friend as I have been telling some others also. As those others are enjoying spiritual joy, you also may enjoy it. The only thing is that you must continue the practice. I do not wish to lead anyone astray as I do not possess that art. You have to convince yourself by experience. From the worldly point of view, you are like parents to me and from the spiritual point of view I am like a father to you. Worldly transactions are to be carried on according to the worldly point of view and spiritual things according to the spiritual standpoint. All saints in the world are objects of reverence to me. But now-a-days many false saints are flourishing. These false saints on the strength of the sayings of old saints say to their disciples, “Miracles are worth less. True saints have considered the performance of miracles as unworthy. We are real saints, who have gone beyond the stage of performing miracles. Real saints never make a display of any miracles.” With such words they delude their disciples and conceal their own falsity and unworthiness. Simple people are deceived thereby and accept Upadesha from Buwas and become their devotees. Both the Buwas and their disciples are thus carried away by the flood of ignorance and sin. These Buwas had committed many sins in their previous births and in this birth also they commit many sins. They deceive women and simple folk and enrich themselves at their expense. When they themselves have no idea of what is real purity of mind, how would they be able to save their disciples ? If there is no water in the well, how can you get it in a bucket taken out from the well? Though Saints of old have considered miracles as unworthy, still on certain fit occasions miracles have occurred at the hands of Saints. Real saints who had reached the stage of complete self-realization had performed miracles on proper occasions. They only say that it is merely a primary stage and aspirants on the spiritual path should not allow themselves to be tempted by them. They should not allow their attention to be diverted from their goal by such miracles.”

After this talk Maharaja asked Mr. Bhavé regarding what he was actually doing in spiritual matters. Mr. Bhavé replied that he was performing Sandhya, recited Vishnu Sahasra Nama, 15th Chapter of Bhagwat Gita, Ganapati Atharva Shirsha, Surya Sukta, and Budra and worshipped Ganapati with twenty one sacred baths (“Abhishek”) as prescribed in scriptures. This was at the bidding of Shri Upasani Maharaja, who had definitely told him that before he died he would have the Darshana of the deity Ganapati.

On the Datta Jayanti day Mr. Bhavé came with sweetmeats and garlands of flowers, explained to Maharaja something from the Shastras and said, “Today is the day of Datta Jayanti. It is a very good day according to the Shastras. Kindly confer your grace upon me today.”

Maharaja replied, "What you say is correct according to the Shastras. But to Saints all days are equally good. They do not look to auspicious or inauspicious days or times. This does not mean that I am a great Saint. You are like a father to me. I shall willingly learn from you. The true knowledge which is really in you but of which you are not conscious, will manifest itself to you. Please communicate it to me then."

Mr. Bhava appreciated the true meaning of this conversation and was greatly delighted. Maharaja then told him to come next Thursday, when he promised to tell Mr. Bhava what had been told to Maharaja by his Guru. Mr. Bhava then garlanded Maharaja, took "Prasad" and went away.

Next day Maharaja made him sit for meditation before him in an erect posture and asked him to concentrate. For about ten minutes he became absolutely void of thought and he told Maharaja about this state, when Maharaja said that he himself had taken his (Mr. Bhava's) thought process under his own control. Since then in his daily career his mind became partially concentrated.

On Thursday he went to Maharaja again. Seeing that he had firm faith, Maharaja told him the mantra "Soham" and also asked him to practise meditation. Mr. Bhava carried on meditation with great devotion and concentration of mind owing to which his mind became absorbed. In the mental worship which he used to perform, Maharaja appeared before him and solved all his doubts and difficulties by explaining all things in detail by apt illustrations.

He used often to complain to Maharaja that he did not see light as other disciples did. Maharaja told him directly and indirectly that he should proceed according to his own way and get whatever experiences are to be obtained in that path. If he would look to the experiences of others or to what is told in the Shastras, he would place himself in a state of doubt and difficulty. There are different ways in the case of different persons. Some see various visions and some hear different kinds of sounds. Sadgura's ways are inscrutable. Some experience different kinds of smells. There is expansion or restriction of the Pranavayu in different parts of the body in the cases of some. Some have to pass through all the six plexuses. Various saints have got various experiences. After this conversation Mr. Bhava continued his own practice and left off asking such questions.

A few months ago, while Mr. Bhava was sitting in his house, he happened to shut his eyes for a moment and he saw Gajanana Maharaja standing near him. This was not merely an illusion but an actual fact. Only the form of Maharaja was of light. Mr. Bhava carried on practice of meditation with full faith and self-confidence and he began to see various wonderful things in his body. He felt that his body became as light as a flower and as if it was moving in the air. He felt that his strength was increasing of itself. He began to practise meditation for longer periods at a time and with greater concentration. He sat in the Padmasana posture, slowly began to lose consciousness of his body and others would actually see that his limbs were becoming contracted

as it wore. He felt his whole body became as light as cotton and feared that it would be blown away if a strong breeze came. It appears clear from this that owing to his great faith, persevering practice and merit acquired in his previous births, he has secured full grace of Maharaja. Without the grace of Sadgura none can hope to acquire this state by means of merely one's own efforts. If anyone says that he would get into this state by his own unaided efforts, he would find himself wrong.

(57) Mr. Ghanekar's Child:- Mr. Dattopant Ghanekar of Nasik has been intimately connected with Maharaja for the last about fourteen years. He visits Maharaja occasionally. Maharaja sometimes used to abuse him but that had no effect upon him. He did not discontinue his visits on that account. On the contrary he has firm faith in Maharaja. He has never asked Maharaja for worldly happiness and is not likely to do so in future.

Sometimes his wife and his child, four years of age, also visited Maharaja for the Darshana. Once Maharaja, as was his wont, began to abuse. Mr. Ghanekar told his wife that the abuses were not meant for her, that Maharaja was in the habit of abusing and that it affected nobody. Thereafter she used to visit Maharaja with the child very often. This child appeared to have acquired great merit in his previous birth, because while sitting near Maharaja he used to go into the state of Samadhi. He used to describe his visions in that state, saying that he got the Darshana of many saints who gave him their blessings and that he felt a sense of deep joy.

Maharaja once said, "This boy will be a great saint in his next three or four births; but you should not expect that he would live long."

This child died at the age of about six years. Mr. Ghanekar visits Maharaja every Thursday.

For the last 5 or 6 years Mrs. Ghanekar gets the possession of the Goddess of Vani on Tuesdays and Fridays. When possessed she gives correct answers to various questions put to her and mentions remedies for difficulties which prove efficacious. When time permits the couple goes to take the Darshana of the Maharaja.

(58) Mr. Sayagaonkar's Peculiar Experience:- A disciple of Maharaja got a very peculiar experience. The experience is so peculiar that the writer of this life-sketch is highly delighted to record it here and also to mention the name of that disciple. It is an experience on the Yoga path, no doubt. But the fact that the disciple should have got this great experience within one year of his initiation has struck all other disciples of Maharaja with wonder and admiration.

The name of the disciple is Mr. Sayagaonkar. He is a photographer and an artist at Nasik. His curiosity in spiritual matters was aroused by reading the works of Vivekananda, Ramatirtha, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and other great saints and ultimately he came to Maharaja, was initiated by him and for the last one year he has been getting some Yoga

experiences, some of which have been narrated in this book. One day Mr. Khare an Auditor from Bombay (the elder brother of Dr. Khare the late Prime Minister of the Central Provinces) with one Mr. Kshirsagar went to Mr. Sayagaonkar and said to him, "I have heard that you practise Yoga and you are also a photographer and an artist. A photo of my Guru is not available at all. I, however, am badly in need of it. I shall sit in front of you and meditate upon my Guru's form. You should enter my mind and then draw a portrait of my Guru."

It may be mentioned here that Mr. Khare practises Dhyana and Dharana himself and he has also written one or two books on Yoga. He also knew through his friend Mr. Kshirsagar that Mr. Sayagaonkar was a disciple of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Now when he said so to Mr. Sayagaonkar, Mr. Sayagaonkar found himself in a fix. He then remembered his Sadguru and replied, "All right. I shall try and see what happens."

Now although Mr. Sayagaonkar remembered his Sadguru and internally got inspiration from the order of his Sadguru, still there was in the background some material owing to which Mr. Sayagaonkar was able to accomplish this hard task. We give a brief description below of this material; but we wish to make it clear to our readers that even with this material an ordinary person would not have been able to do what Mr. Sayagaonkar did. A very great development in Dhyana Yoga is absolutely necessary for achieving this result. Mr. Khare's father had given Mr. Khare an accurate and detailed description of the form and features of his Guru and Mr. Khare in his meditation always contemplated upon the form of his Guru as described by his father. He personally had not seen his Guru. When Mr. Khare got a keen desire to have a portrait of his Guru and made a firm resolve in his mind to have such portrait prepared, he with the help of Mr. Kshirsagar of Nasik, who has studied the use of a planchet and has become an expert in it, first of all had satisfied himself that the features and form of his Guru, upon which he used to meditate were correct. Mr. Khare gave a description of the features and form of his Guru to Mr. Sayagaonkar when he asked Mr. Sayagaonkar to draw the portrait.

Then Mr. Khare and Mr. Sayagaonkar sat in front of each other in meditation. After the meditation was over Mr. Sayagaonkar drew up a sketch of the form and features of Mr. Khare's Guru as Mr. Sayagaonkar saw in his meditation and the wonder was that the sketch exactly corresponded with the form of Mr. Khare's Guru as Mr. Khare used everyday to see in his meditation. Mr. Khare was highly delighted and immediately requested Mr. Sayagaonkar to paint a full and complete portrait of his Guru. Mr. Sayagaonkar, however, did not begin the work at once but kept it aside for about 7 or 8 days, as Mr. Khare left Nasik and was not expected to come back within that time. During this time of seven eight days, one peculiar thing happened which is also wonderful. Every day Mr. Sayagaonkar felt an internal impulse to read Shiva-geeta. On making enquiries it was learnt that Mr. Khare's Guru (Hansaraj Swami), who flourished more than a hundred years ago, had written a big commentary in Ovi Metre on the Shivageeta, known by the name of Vedeshwari. It appears that that great saint was as it were standing before Mr.

Sayagaonkar and getting his own portrait drawn by him by internally urging him to read Shivageeta. How visions seen internally in Dhyana-Yoga are translated into actual physical facts is a problem which for modern materialistic philosophers would be a hard nut to crack. Great souls, who have left their mortal body and become one with the Omnipresent, Everlasting and All-pervading Entity, manifest themselves to a person in this physical world, provided he has attained purity of mind and a Sattwic temperament, and these great souls get certain things done through such a person in this physical world.

Mr. Sayagaonkar's experience is a typical instance of this great truth.

Mr. Sayagaonkar painted the portrait and Mr. Khare was entirely satisfied with it. In the same way i.e. by sitting in meditation, Mr. Sayagaonkar painted the portrait of Mr. Khare's father also.

In connection with Mr. Khare, Mr. Sayagaonkar narrated the following additional experience, which we give below in Mr. Sayagaonkar's own words :

"To-day i.e. on 21-5-1940, Mr. Khare came here from Bombay for performing the obsequies of his step-mother. He came to me and expressed a desire to have a photo of his own mother (dead long ago), as no photo of hers was available. I had been suffering from Malaria, for the last more than a week and I requested him not to press me to do so, as I would not be able to do it. But he persisted in his request and I found it hard to refuse it. I then agreed to do as he desired. I, however, thought that owing to weakness I would not be able to sit in meditation and to concentrate. I then remembered my Sadguru and sat in meditation. I immediately saw a shining throne before me but not occupied by anybody. As soon as the thought that the throne was empty crossed my mind, I saw that my Sadguru was sitting on that throne and heard the words, "Do the work." The vision then disappeared. I then told Mr. Khare that I would begin the work. Mr. Khare then sat in meditation and contemplated upon his mother. I too saw his mother in meditation and immediately afterwards drew up a sketch of his mother on a paper and showed it to Mr. Khare, who was extremely delighted and agreed that it was exactly like his mother, upon whom he had contemplated in his meditation. I told him that all that was the result of my devotion to my Guru.

On the day previous to this at about 9 p.m. at night I was sitting in meditation. I saw one human body and three or four bodies coming out of it. One of the bodies was full of lustre and I heard the following words coming out of that body. "I alone am the real body full of Prana." I then understood that the other bodies were merely made of the five elements. The other bodies then got merged into that lustrous body, which also became one with Chaitanya. I then returned to normal consciousness. It was about 10-30 p.m. at the time.

I mentioned this experience of mine on the previous day to Mr. Khare. In his book on Prana-Shakti, Mr. Khare had described a similar experience and he read out that portion to me, which thoroughly satisfied me.

(59) Welde Maharaja :- Welde Maharaja is a Saint who is staying in Nasik for the last 20 or 25 years. About a year ago he came to know about Gajanana Maharaja and began to visit him. He was observing the vow of silence for the last 12 or 15 years. He used to convey his ideas by writing them down. On one occasion there were about ten or twelve people sitting, when Welde Maharaja came to see Shri Gajanana Maharaja with one Damushet Sali, another saint. Both the saints viz. Gajanana Maharaja and Welde Maharaja were writing on a slate for about an hour but others could not understand what was being written.

Since then, however, Welde Maharaja has begun to speak a few words. He is a Brahmin by caste. He had a son about 18 years old. Welde Maharaja used to go to the Godavari very early in the morning and perform his Sandhya there. He was considered as mad by people and even now some people consider him mad. He never goes to anybody. Only occasionally he goes to Shri Gajanana Maharaja and to the saint of Sali caste referred to above, who is about 80 years old.

(60) Conclusion:- All people who have seen Maharaja or observed miracles performed by him, even though they may be his worst enemies, must be sure in their minds that Maharaja has never taken even a single pie from others and that he has no wish to do so. Then what would be the purpose of displaying false miracles?

Maharaja has visited several places. Not a single individual in all these places would ever say that Maharaja has in any case deceived any one or obtained money from him. Only some years ago when he used to take wine, he openly asked for it. It is true that he sometimes abuses others, is not very regular in taking his bath, has no learning of Vedanta and does not perform worship of Gods with flowers and other outward materials. Whatever he says in his simple words is his Vedanta which is based on self-experience and not on books. This Vedanta is such that ordinary people can understand and appreciate it.

Although there are some of Maharaja's disciples staying at Nasik, Maharaja generally does not go to their houses for years together unless there is some special reason. However it depends upon his whim. He never goes to some at all while he goes to others of his own accord without being called. When Maharaja indulged in drinking wine, he never drank it stealthily. He openly told people that he was addicted to drinking. But he never offered it to others as 'Prasad'. On the contrary if any one who was addicted to drinking went to Maharaja, he advised him to leave it off, impressing upon his mind that drinking had been responsible for the ruin of many families. There are instances of some persons who have left off drinking altogether owing to the advice of Maharaja. Maharaja used to say on this subject, "If a person has any defects, the responsibility for them lies upon him. You may come to me or not as you like. I do not insist on your listening to my advice and acting according to it. It is a matter which should be left to everybody's conscience. Really people like you should not associate with persons like me. You will

thereby render yourselves objects of censure and obloquy. Of course I have no objection to your coming to me. The world will naturally censure things which appear bad to it. If your Guru is a drunkard, people will censure him and you must be prepared to listen to it with equanimity. The only thing to be remembered is that appearances are not always true and are not permanent. Real saints are beyond all censure.”

Those who had seen Maharaja about seven or eight years ago when he was drinking, would be doubtful whether they are seeing the same Maharaja to-day and would be convinced that appearances are transient. If a saint appears outwardly addicted to a vice, it does not necessarily mean that internally also he is so. Similarly if a person appears outwardly to be of pure conduct, there is no guarantee that internally also he is so. In short one should not form one's opinion without experience of a long standing and should never put blind faith in anyone.

Maharaja says, “I have to say this to you as you are people who have to lead worldly lives. To me, either censure or praise is entirely worthless and meaningless. But I have to speak to people according to the worldly standard.”

Even though Maharaja used to take intoxicating drinks still merely by the glances from his eyes he could make the things pure. Various respectable persons have convinced themselves of this fact and all their doubts have been removed. The only thing Maharaja persistently lays stress upon is that a person should day and night repeat ‘Soham’ in his mind and direct all his senses towards it. He would then become one with it.

He sometimes says, “I have not made any efforts to obtain the Siddhi of speech (i.e. the power which is gained by a Saint by which whatever words come out of his mouth prove to be true and events occur accordingly). I have also no great merit acquired in previous births. There are many learned and meritorious Saints and Mahatmas whose words carry influence with people and hence people flock to them. Such saints are highly esteemed and they would be able to effect cures and other things. I am a simple man like yourselves; only owing to keeping company with good men I have acquired the qualities of a real human being. I am always trying to take a lesson from whatever good I find in others. I am an ignorant child in the Universal Family. I am just like water which takes on the colour of the thing with which it comes in contact.”

Sometimes when Maharaja is in a joyous mood, he gives discourses useful to a person practising meditation and illustrates his remarks by apt worldly illustrations and stories. Once he said, Varkaries often say that the body is the temple and the soul is Panduranga. But only those will know the truth of this statement, “who will try to get inner spiritual experience. If anybody would ask me as to my experience regarding the above, I would say that I am not merely quoting the sayings of Saints. Merely giving quotations is the business of learned men who explain to others without having any real experience themselves. If a person has really experienced these things in

himself and he says that he has done so, he should not be blamed as showing pride. There is nothing blamable in such Sattvic Ahankar. If a person is rich, is the master of thousands of rupees, and he actually gives you one thousand rupees at the time of your need and then says to somebody else that he has given you one thousand rupees, would you blame him for being proud of his wealth?

No. If, however, a man having nothing says that he would give a thousand rupees to anyone, then only he deserves censure. Similarly a saint, who, instead of merely saying that he has found God and known Him, has really realised Him in his self, then only he is a fitting guide to all aspirants on the spiritual path. The Mantra "Soham" tells the same principle. He alone is a true-saint who has thoroughly realised the truth of "Soham" (i.e. I am He). His mind, intellect and his senses and even the hair on his body are full of the true meaning of "Soham". He may or may not do any outward actions. Even though he may do certain actions, he is detached from them. He is Videhi (apart from the body) like King Janaka. He looks upon worldly and spiritual things equally and goes beyond the states of pain and pleasure. He knows the only true entity and is always experiencing the state of unlimited joy. Therefore I say that Shakti should be the object of meditation. Some people say that meditating upon Nirakara (formless) is difficult. But in my opinion it is very easy and in addition it is natural.

A man easily gets into the state of Samadhi by meditating upon Nirakara. The path of doing so is, however, concealed and secret. Once you get it you can be in that state although outwardly you may be talking, laughing, playing, or sleeping. This power is concealed like the river Saraswati. As some people have not understood this secret path, therefore, they say that it is difficult, and that it would require the passing of various lives to obtain success in it. Not to see anything in Dhyana shows a state of concentration. When seeing is turned into non-seeing, then there is the real state of Samadhi. The state of complete Samadhi is like the state of death but it is a state of life after having conquered death. The state of sleep is also a kind of death and he really knows the secret of Dhyana Yoga whose sleep is nothing but Samadhi.

I therefore, say that if you have learnt Dhyana Yoga it is all well with you. If not, try to learn it. Leave off learning Shastras and do not entangle yourselves in discussions. If you merely learn Shastras and try to acquire mere learning, you will spend lives after lives uselessly. You might get a reputation for saintliness and deceive others and yourselves. But in your innermost soul you will know your real worth and would have to wander through cycles of births and deaths. Strictly speaking God is none else than our own soul. Every one should try to see this soul by the torch of "Soham", and obtain the internal sight. Saints have said, "Persons who have obtained the internal vision are saved while those who have only the external vision are drowned." I do not say that you should not meditate upon a deity or your Guru. I only say that you should obtain the internal vision. Do not meditate merely upon the form but upon the internal power which pervades that form. It does not matter whether you can do external actions correctly or not. If you really enter inside, your real Guru who is inside will automatically lead you to

the right path. Only you would not be able to understand clearly who is leading you on.

Kabir has said, "If you want to know the Eternal, you won't find Him in the Vedas, the Shastras or in the Koran, in the Temples or in the Mosques. Penance, pilgrimage, breath-control, or living on merely Neem leaves would not lead you to Him. You can find Him only in your breath (Soham- "So" when taking in and "Ham" when giving out the breath)."

All human beings on this earth are really Gods themselves but those who know themselves enjoy peace and joy. They alone are entitled to say to an aspirant, "Whomsoever you think as an incarnation of God, he is really an incarnation." I only wish to warn false saints that they should not represent themselves to be incarnations of Rama, Krishna, Datta, or the Goddess and deceive ignorant people. If your life is not pure, what can soap do? Your mind must be internally merged in the divine joy. Do not put on merely the outward dress of a Saint, such as orange coloured robes or garlands of Rudraksha beads and deceive others as well as yourselves. Do not entertain evil thought? If, however they arise in your mind, check them then and there by the mantra "Soham". Then your mind gradually would become void of thoughts. But you must be very careful then. Because Siddhis will then tempt you. Do not succumb to them but discard them, and go straight to your goal and be one with your self. Then dualism will disappear and you will enjoy the real bliss of self. The real mission of great saints is to teach ignorant persons how to turn inside, towards their real self. They make the human, soul realise that he is not insignificant and mean but he is really the beloved child of God. Those who have received modern education cannot appreciate this. Samarth Ramdas has, however, said that, a Saint should always carry on the Kirtana of God on the earth. However I have tried to explain in my own way certain things so that they may be acceptable to all, ignorant as well as learned."

Shri Gajanama Maharaja is at present staying at Nasik and small number of persons who are aspirants on the Spiritual Path are his disciples. Among persons who have been initiated by Shri Gajanana Maharaja at Nasik are the following :

- (1) Damotdar Martand Chitnis and his son Madhu.
- (2) Vishwanath Gopal Vaidya – the writer of 'Shri Guru Kripadhyaya'.
- (3) Gangadharpant Walawalkar.
- (4) Vishnupant Chaphekar.
- (5) Vaman Keshav Mahegaonkar – the writer of Guru Shishya Vijnana Deepika' (since deceased)
- (6) Shankar Malhar Sant.
- (7) Bhargava Vaman Parchure.
- (8) Pandurang Laxaman Bhagwat.
- (9) D. D. Bhawe.
- (10) Prof. K. R. Karandikar of the Technical Royal Institute, Bombay.
- (11) Mr. Kane, retired Postal Superintendent.
- (12) Dattatraya Keshav Bhat.

- (13) P. L. Inamdar.
- (14) Vasant Narayan Nirokhekar.
- (15) Ambadas Gopal Paithankar.
- (16) Govind Dadaji Mandavgane.
- (17) Shankar Keshav Phansalkar.
- (18) Krishnaji Govind Kurdukar (Vaidya).

To these persons who have got actual experiences in Dhyana Yoga the publication of this life-sketch is a matter of indifference. Most of these persons have come in contact with Shri Gajanana Maharaja during the last seven or eight years. Without putting blind faith, these persons have got actual experiences and they are enjoying peace of mind and joy. Those who are keenly desirous of obtaining the guidance of a real Sadguru are hereby invited to take advantage of the presence of Gajanana Maharaja and try to realise some of these experiences. If they get any experiences themselves naturally they will stick on, if they don't they can leave off. There is no question here of paying Guru Dakshina or anything else. Maharaja's personality is very genial and witty and by his affectionate dealings with all who come in contact with him, he attracts people to himself. Aspirants are sure to be benefited by the company of such a Saint.

We shall conclude this life-sketch of Shri Gajanana Maharaja with a brief description of his personality. He is one of the most unostentatious persons one so rarely meets with in these days of reckless egoism and spiritual bankruptcy. Though a cripple and lame in the right leg and rather lean and emaciated in his general constitution, one rarely finds him gloomy or morose in his dealings with the world and the people in it.

(61) Nature and Person:- In fact he has an inexhaustible fund of sparkling humour on his lips, which on the whole is more innocent and healthy than sarcastic, calculated and jarring. He is a bachelor in the strict sense of the term and looks upon all women as his mothers or sisters. He has all the appearance of a worldly man about himself. He likes to dress well, is clean and tidy and his stiff collar, golden pin and white speckled tie are rather typical of him. His food habits are of the simplest kind. He takes food only once or twice in a week and it consists of merely a piece of bread with some unspiced vegetables. Usually he takes tea five or six times daily. This is all the more remarkable because even in those days when he used to drink very hard, he rarely took any sumptuous meals to counteract the effects of intoxication as ordinary persons would have done. He has given up drinking wine once for all but he is very fond of tea and smokes cigarettes almost continuously. With his smoking habit is associated a queer phenomenon. It has been the experience of several of his disciples and friends, that even though he is smoking the most guaranteed tobacco cigarettes, the atmosphere surrounding his person gets filled with the sweet smell of burning incense sticks, particularly at moments when he withdraws his mind into an ecstatic mood.

In his external appearance and mode of life, there is thus very little in him which would betray a great Yogi hidden within. In fact nearly all those who come in contact with him carry the first impression of his being an ordinary

person with worldly habits and earthly ideas. It is only more intimate contact with him that convinces others of the presence of a mighty soul residing in that frail body. Not that there is any dubiousness about him, but it is all due to his instinctive virtue of self-effacement so characteristic of him since his childhood. No wonder then that some of his disciples have likened him to Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Bengal in this particular trait in his nature.

It is noteworthy to mention here, that whenever he writes to others he invariably styles himself as “Your humble sweeper or broom.” Curiously enough that word broom is very significant. It unmistakably indicates this man's mission in this life. It appears he has been charged by destiny to serve as a sweeper of the minds of men, who happen to come to him. Human mind often gets clouded and eclipsed by a false and deceitful valuation of material things. It becomes dirty and unclean and cannot therefore see the beacon light within. In the absence of a guiding star, it becomes miserable, despondent and diseased. Modern medical science may cure physical disabilities and alleviate bodily sufferings, but it is absolutely helpless in regard to mental disorders particularly of the type mentioned above. The only science that would render effective and lasting cure to the human mind under such conditions is the Science of Dhyana Yoga.

Shri Gajanana Maharaja by a continuous practice in his previous births and by the grace of his Guru in this life is an adept in that Science. He often says that he has yet to climb many a step but that whatever he has learned so far, it is his bounden duty to give it to others in the name of his Guru and thus help deserving humanity to see and realise the Divine light inside each and every individual. His principal mission therefore is to sweep the human mind of its dirt, render it an effective reflector of the Inner Light and thus establish harmony or equilibrium between spirit and matter. One fact however needs special mention here.

Though his mission has a positive background, Shri Gajanana Maharaja being by nature a strictly non-advertising person has never allowed himself to be brought into the lime-light of this world like so many other contemporary saints. He has in fact left it to the seekers of truth first to seek him out of obscurity and then to attain their salvation through his guidance. This is exactly in keeping with his tendency towards self-effacement and absolute humility. In this connection we give below a translation of an extract from Mr. Nagesh Wasudeo Gunaji's review of “Guru Shishya Vijnana Deepika”, which appeared in the Poona Newspaper “Gorakshana” of Kartik Shudh 11, Shaka 1860.

All other Gods are illusory. The only eternal God is Gurudev alone.”

Shri Sai Satcharitra (10.4)

Shri Hemadpant, the author of the life of Shri Sai Baba, says :-

“Blessed are these stories of Saints ! When they enter the heart through the ear, egotism goes out and duality disappears. The more they are stored up in the heart, the less becomes the force of doubts and questionings which ultimately dwindle away. The store of real knowledge increases and correspondingly egotism goes on the wane.”

If, therefore, we listen attentively to the stories of the lives of saints, we are greatly benefited. But how should we recognise such Saints? What are their characteristics? This subject has been discussed at great length in various works. It is not possible to give a detailed description of all these discussions here. Besides very few of us have the capability of testing in a given case the presence or absence of all these characteristics. Under these circumstances, we shall only mention one characteristic which is the most important of them all and which, if present, would unerringly convince us of the saintliness of a particular individual. A person who possesses this characteristic may safely be relied on as a Sadguru and people putting faith in him would never be in danger of being misled.

“The chief thing is that egotism must absolutely disappear.”

- Tukaram

It is this egotism which is a stumbling block in worldly as well as spiritual matters. It is the most insuperable obstacle to all progress and it troubles all, whether they are devoted to worldly or spiritual life.

“It is a wonderful characteristic of egotism that it does not trouble an ignorant person much but it catches a learned person by the neck and involves him in tremendous difficulties.” How full of truth are these observations of Shri Jnaneshwar ! This egotism is not only very hard to subdue but it is also so minute and subtle that even great men fail to understand that they are its victims. It is present in at very subtle form even in persons who take great pains to show in their behaviour with others that they are absolutely humble and have not the least trace of egotism in them. Such is the wonderful jugglery of this egotism. If, however, by the grace of the Almighty this egotism really disappears in its entirety, the life of a person, whether worldly or spiritual, becomes full of bliss indeed. In the well known lines, “I saw with my own eyes my own death; the bliss experienced in that state was incomparable indeed” Shri Tukaram refers to the permanent death of this very egotism.

Shri Eknath Maharaja also says in his Bhagavat :-

“All pride of body, all desire of obtaining respect, all sense of superiority must be absolutely rooted out. Then only one would become worthy of obtaining oneness with Brahman.”

Shri Namadeva makes an earnest prayer to God saying, “May the breeze of egotism not touch the faithful, believing and gentle minded devotees of Vishnu, who all are my brothers.”

If there are any such Saints who have entirely rooted out this egotism and become one with Brahman, one cannot do better than place oneself under their guidance with entire submission. We shall give one or two instances of such saints and then see how far this particular characteristic is to be found in Shri Gajanana Maharaja.

(1) Look at Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi who is considered an incarnation of Shri Datta. How he used to behave towards his devotees and disciples has been described by his biographer Shri Hemadpant in the following words:

“Full of compassion for his devotees, Baba used to say in deep humility to them that he was their humble servant and greatly in their debt and was highly delighted to meet them, that the meeting was a great favour bestowed upon him by them, that he was an insignificant worm made blessed by them. What wonderful humility is this! Baba had entirely uprooted egotism and hence he was so courteous and humble”

(2) The second instance may be taken of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. There may be very few who have not heard the name of this great Saint. About a year and a half ago, on the centenary of his birthday many great men from Europe and America had come to India to take a part in the celebrations. It is worth noting how this great Saint succeeded in rooting out egotism. He heard that it was essential to root out egotism and immediately he began to pray to Kali Mother, saying, “Oh Mother, drive away my egotism, let me always feel that I am the lowest of all.” Moreover he was not satisfied with merely offering this prayer but began to put this idea into practice in his actual dealings. He used to remove quietly at night the pots from the latrines and having washed them with the water of the Ganges, used to bring them back and keep them in their places. It was only when people came to know about this that they stopped it. Similarly he for some days went to the dwellings of untouchables and swept their court-yards. He also used to remove the leaves on which beggars had eaten their food in Kali-Wadi. In this manner he succeeded in absolutely rooting out his egotism. Even from a look at his photo one can get an idea of the entire absence of egotism in him.

(3) The story of one of his disciples also is equally instructive. He had one disciple who was a house-holder and was known by the name of Master Mahashaya. This Master Mahashaya has published the sayings and precepts of his Guru in Bengali in four or five volumes. He has also published a book in two volumes in English called “The Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna” which is based upon the above mentioned work in Bengali. Both these books have been highly praised and are very delightful and touching. With Master Mahashaya’s permission I myself have published one part of it in Marathi entitled “Shri Ramakrishna”. In all these books he has mentioned his own name as merely “M”. Regarding this I have said in the preface to “Shri Ramakrishna” as follows :-

“Plato also published dialogues of his Guru Socrates but there is something special in this work of M. M takes the reader lovingly by the hand

and leads him straight before Shri Ramakrishna and makes him listen to the sayings of his Guru as if the talk is going on then and there before him, while he himself remains in the background. When the reader's mind is deeply gratified by listening to the sayings of Shri Ramakrishna, the reader is at a loss to know whether he should praise the greatness of the knowledge and devotion of the Guru or the wonderful humility of the disciple M. If the reader turns round for the purpose of thanking M. for having introduced him to the companionship of Shri Ramakrishna and other saints, he finds himself unable to trace M. at all, because M. has kept his name, address, place of residence, in short all information regarding himself, a profound secret. All should learn the lesson of humility from this M, (His full name was Mahendra Nath Gupta)"

In this quality of humility and absence of egotism Shri Gajanana Maharaja stands on a very high level. His disciple Mr. Vaidya writes in his "Guru-Kripadhyaya" :- "Maharaja said to me that in the outward world I should behave towards him as if I was his elder and he (Maharaja) was a youngster."

The following lines from "Guru Shishya Vijnana Deepika" will give an idea as to how he behaves towards his other disciples :

"Shri Guru Gajanana Maharaja is a great personality and knows worldly as well as spiritual matters thoroughly well. If any one bows to him as a Sadguru he bows to him in return. He addresses old men as fathers, young men as brothers and women as mothers or sisters calling himself their child. His words are so full of affection and his eyes are suffused with tears. He does not treat anyone as his disciple and does not accept service from anyone but loves one and all." Shri Gajanana Maharaja stayed at Parel with one of his relatives for sixteen years. He remained there unknown like Mahendra, the disciple of Shri Ramakrishna, described above. Nobody had the least idea that he was a Yogi or a Maharaja. At present he is stopping at Nasik, where too he is known to very few persons and there are no signs that he will come into celebrity.

"A bow to that broom always"

There is one more wonderful thing which we have to relate to readers. Although we have used the words "Shri Gajanana Maharaja" in designating the Saint, he addresses himself as "Your Broom", whenever he writes to any of his disciples. This throws a wonderful light upon his humility as well as his skill in choosing the epithet. We often hear of some person being called a broom in the sense that he is absolutely an insignificant person. Thus when Maharaja styles himself as "your broom," he shows his great, humility and his desire that he should be considered as entirely insignificant and of no consequence. The real work of a broom is, however, to sweep off all rubbish and dirt and to make a place clean and then to lie unnoticed in a corner.

Shri Ramakrishna, as mentioned above, used to sweep the place clean in Kali-Wadi and also the court-yards of the houses of untouchables. But Shri Gajanana Maharaja sweeps the minds of his disciples clean by his spiritual

power. Mr. Vaidya describes his own experience in this connection in his “Guru-Kripadhyaya” in the following words :

“One day I was sitting near the feet of my Sadguru and was making strenuous efforts to curb my mind. I, however, could not succeed in the least. Seeing me in this pitiable condition, Maharaja said to me that I should leave my mind free to wander anywhere it liked, that he himself had taken my mind in his hands and that no thoughts would arise at all. To my surprise I found that my mind became entirely absorbed and the flow of ideas stopped altogether.”

Similar experiences of various disciples have been described in the third and fourth chapters of “Guru Shishya Vijnana Deepika”. It appears that the real work of this holy broom is to purify the mind and to make an aspirant worthy of reaching the state of Moksha.

Disciples of Shri Gajanana Maharaja used to be wondering why he took to himself such a name but one of his devotees understood the real object of the choice of that epithet and he has described the real meaning of the term in a short hymn addressed to Maharaja entitled, “A bow to that broom always.”

We also bow our head before this “broom”.

In consonance with the mission stated above Shri Gajanana Maharaja has initiated so far many an aspirant into the Science of Dhyana Yoga. Some of these people were Arta, while others were real Jijnasus. Whatever their nature, whosoever approached him with a sincerity of heart and firmness of purpose, was gladly shown the way to spiritual realization and eternal bliss.

The experiences of some of these aspirants in the process of their spiritual enlightenment have been given in this book about this great, though unassuming, Saint of Nasik.

It may be that these experiences, though varied in their exposition according to the mental make-up of each individual aspirant, would induce other seekers of truth to find a source of solace and a way to salvation in this holy city of Maharashtra.

CHAPTER IV

SOME INTERESTING CONVERSATIONS

I

One day a man who was very proud of his Shastric learning, which too was only superficial, came to Maharaja and began with the words, "Maharaja, having heard about your great renown, I have come to you with the full hope that all my doubts and difficulties would be dispelled and solved by you. I have firm faith in you." Maharaja minutely looked at his face and at once understood that the man must have been directed to him by some one, with the object of making him non-plussed and an object of ridicule. The man said, "Two or three days ago I had come here but on that day you were ill. Hence I have come to-day."

Maharaja :- My good sir, who told you that I am a Maharaja ? Everybody knows that I do not know anything about the Shastras and that I can never explain anything from the Shastras. How can I solve your difficulties? You said that you have firm faith in me. Did you see any miracle performed by me or did you get any special experience, so that faith was generated in your mind? Or were you a relative or a school fellow or a very dear friend of mine in your and mine previous births, so that that previous relationship unwillingly attracted you towards me? You see at present I am often very ill. Through the grace of my Guru I have been seeking to know the nature of death and in doing so I have actually approached it. Once I know what is death, I shall then find out God by means of the mantra, "Soham". I shall then know who I am and will begin to enjoy the bliss of self. The whole world will then appear to me as nothing but Brahman. Then only through the order of my Guru I shall be able to explain all the Shastras. Until I reach that stage, how can I, an ignorant and uneducated man as I am, presume to tell anything to a learned Pundit like you? What I think, however, is this; when a person, whether educated or ignorant, wants to go to a Saint for the purpose of obtaining from him success in the accomplishment of worldly objects or any guidance on the spiritual path, he should first of all make full inquiries regarding the conduct of the Saint in his dealings with the world and after being fully convinced that his conduct is pure, should go to him. He should not merely depend upon hearsay reports regarding his great spiritual powers. He should also read carefully the lives of the great saints of the past and ponder deeply over them. He should then think out for himself and come to a conclusion regarding what is right and what is wrong. After that he should approach a Saint with a feeling of due submission, after purging his mind of all pride of learning, of all doubts and of all misgivings. If this is done then the Siddhi Vinayak (the Lord of all Powers) would grant him all happiness in worldly life as well as spiritual bliss in his own self.

This is my candid opinion, which I have arrived at through the grace of my Guru and of my own inner self. A person gets pleasures and pains in this world according to the good or bad actions of his previous lives. Though Saints and Mahatmas have all powers, still everyone has to suffer the results

of his own previous Karma. Saints do not interfere with the working of this law. Their mission in this world is to point out the way leading to everlasting happiness and thus to make persons going to them blessed in the real sense of the term. They pay very little heed to worldly pleasures and pains which are after all of an ephemeral nature. The great Saint Tukaram, who had realised God, has proclaimed with a loud voice in words worth their weight in gold, his great anxiety regarding worldly people who are groping in the darkness of ignorance. He says with deep feelings of love and care : "I cannot bear to see all these people floundering in the mire of ignorance and hence my heart overflows with pity. I shall try to save all these souls." Oh, my good Sir, you are learned in Shastras. I request you to leave off the reading of the Shastras and giving dry advice to others and specially to leave off trying to ridicule Saints who should be approached with feelings of reverence and submission. You appear to be about sixty years old. Merely performing Sandhya, worshipping Gods with flowers and garlands and marking your forehead with sandal would be of no real use to you. You must have a real feeling of devotion and learn to see the one God in all these various external objects. My earnest request to you is that you should go to a real saint and learn how to obtain this kind of devotion at his feet.

These words of Maharaja had a great effect on that man's mind, and he said, "Maharaja, you have really swept off all dirt from my mind with your broom of "Soham" and I am now thoroughly satisfied. I had indeed come to make you non-plussed and then to ridicule you. I had once before seen you and then formed an unfavourable opinion about you. Hence I had come today with the fixed object of putting you to ridicule. But you understood this state of my mind and gave me this sincere, excellent and disinterested advice, for which I am deeply grateful to you. I accept your advice with bowed head. What is the use of advanced age? I am sure that you will be a real Guru and will save many people like me by initiating them into the path of spiritual knowledge."

Maharaja :-You are a learned Brahmin. It is my duty to pay you respect. You are like a Guru to me. I have heard a story which I shall tell you. Please pay careful attention to it. Many years ago there lived a king. He issued a proclamation by beat of drum that persons who understood what was written in the Jnaneshwari should pay him a visit. After this proclamation many Pundits who were continually reading Jnaneshwari began to visit him. Some said they had read Jnaneshwari 25 times, some said they had read it 50 times, while some others said that they had read it one hundred times. Every time the king ordered his guards to place the Pundit in confinement in a dark cell. A Brahmin in very indigent circumstances came to know about the king's proclamation. He also heard that all the learned Brahmins who had gone to see the king had not come back. He thought they must be all enjoying Royal feasts and amassing vast sums of money as Dakshina. He thought that he too should wear his Dhabli (coarse woollen sacred cloth) and go to see the king with a pot in his hand, having besmeared his forehead with sacred ashes. He thought that as no Brahmin who had gone to the king had returned, the king must not be asking any questions, to the Brahmins at all.

Accordingly he also went to see the king and was confined in dark cell like the others. This Brahmin had a very devoted wife. Her internal "Soham" had become one with her inner soul and she had identified her husband with her inner soul. What must be the real worth of such a woman! She remained without food and water for three days and then went straight and saw the king. The king was extremely surprised as up to that time no woman had come to see him. He then asked his queen to receive her properly. The queen did so and gave her a very costly sari to wear. The king then said to her that his proclamation had been regarding persons who knew Jnaneshwari well and asked her why she had come there to see him. She replied, "I have got no work with you. My husband has come to you. It is now three days that he left me. I waited for him up to today. During these three days I have not touched either food or water. Please tell me where he is." The king said, "I do not exactly know where he is. All Pundits knowing Jnaneshwari have been thrown into confinement in dark sells. Perhaps your husband might be in one of them." She said, "Oh king, have you yourself understood anything about Jnaneshwari? Will a person who has really understood Jnaneshwari ever stay in your kingdom? He would be in everything and apart from everything. He would always be detached. Would such a person ever come to you? Didn't you understand this?" When she said this, the king bowed down to her feet and ordered all Pundits to be released from confinement and brought before him. The king then said to all those learned Pundits that great lady had alone really understood Jnaneshwari and that they should consider her as their Guru. He then gave Dakshina to all and allowed them to go away.

Well, my story is over. You should take what lesson you can from it. I tell you one last thing. The life and letters of Shri Gulabrao Maharaja have been now published. Please do read them and think over them. I derived very great benefit from Shri Gulabrao Maharaja's company and from reading his works and hence I am pressing you. Whenever a person, big or small, male or female, feels the want of anything, whether worldly or spiritual, he approaches God and begs Him for granting his desire. We go to a temple. The idol there is of stone. But we, through faith, attribute to it the Divine powers of Shri Rama or Shri Krishna and pray to the idol to grant our desires and we get the fruit of these prayers at some time or other. This is true in the case of all human beings. Whenever a person entertains a desire to obtain some worldly object or to attain spiritual progress, he obtains the fruit of his desire as a result of his efforts in this life or of his Karma in previous lives, or owing to fate or destiny, call it anything you like - No astrologer or saint or God is required for that. Men and women go to a Saint, whether a true one or a false one, for getting their desires fulfilled. Some want service, some are in want of progeny and some want the curing of their diseases. An aspirant on the spiritual path desires to obtain the bliss of self or the vision of God. I wish to say with all the earnestness at my command that every person should internally repeat the mantra "Soham" and should bear in mind that he himself would be able to fulfil his desires. Only it must be borne in mind that he must keep his conduct pure, should have at least a little Vairagya and should have firm faith in "Soham". When once a person obtains this self-confidence, he is sure to get self experience and will meet with his real Guru. Evil thoughts will then cease to rise. One thing regarding this Japa must it be remembered. This Japa of

“Soham” must be repeated continuously in the mind. It should not be allowed to be known to others that you are repeating the Japa. This Japa should be so continuously and incessantly repeated that it must be heard internally even in our sleep. When the Japa thus becomes one with the mind, it should be repeated in any one of the six plexuses. When this stage is reached, a person even when in sound sleep, gets an internal shock urging him to get up and begin the practice. If he then prays to this God of internal light to grant his desires, he should be absolutely sure of his prayers being granted.

This method is a hundred times superior to that of praying for favours to God who is outside ourselves. Not only will the desires be granted but either in this or in the next birth according to the person's present efforts and previous Karma, a person is sure to attain the highest bliss of self. Of course a Sadguru is required and his grace is also absolutely necessary. But if all my brothers and sisters will do as I have just told you, they would be able to enjoy real happiness and would never fall into the clutches of false Saints. Well, my good sir, I wish that you will spread the knowledge of what I have just now told you among others and to make the lives of many families happy and contented.

II

One day a gentleman came to Maharaja for his Darshana having come to know about him from some one. He was a well read man and had visited various Saints. The following discourse then took place between him and Maharaja, which we give below as it throws light on many interesting points in religious and spiritual matters.

Maharaja :- You are referring to the Shastras. Will you please tell me what religious books you have read?

Gentleman:- I have read the Upanishads, Yoga Vasishtha, Panchadashi, Bhagwad-Geeta, Jnaneshwari and others.

Maharaja :- I have not even heard the names of some of these, nor have I read any of them. But will you tell me whether you understood them and whether these books solved all your doubts and difficulties?

Gentleman :- No. I then began to think that all this reading is useless without guidance from a Sadguru and kept these books aside.

Maharaja :- I think you did a very good thing. When I was in school I had learnt a verse to the effect that life is too short for studying what is contained in all the Shastras. To learn Vedanta or to teach it to others is not bad, but you must first learn it at the feet of a Sadguru. Then only it will be of any real use to you. Well, I now know that you have read a good deal of Vedanta. Have you read the lives of any of the Saints?

Gentleman :- Yes. I have read the lives of Shri Ramadas and of the Swami Maharaja of Akkalkot. I have also read the life and letters of Shri

Gulabrao Maharaja and some of the books written by him which have been published. I, however, remember only a little of the principles explained by Shri Gulabrao Maharaja in his letters and books.

Maharaja :- All right. Do you remember that Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has dealt with the subject of "Dosha-Drishti" (faultfinding tendency) and its different kinds? And will you be able to tell me what you remember of the subject?

Gentleman :- I do not remember anything about it.

Maharaja :- All right. I shall tell you about it. Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has divided the tendency to find faults into three categories, viz. (1) Individualistic ; (2) Social ; and (3) Scriptural. He says, "If a father says to his son that he would get the son married, the son would be pleased no doubt but this pleasure is quite of a different nature from the pleasure which he would get from the actual company of his wife. The same sort of difference is there between a Jnani (one who has realized the Brahman) and a Vadi (one who merely discusses Vedanta). A blind man delivering hundreds of lectures on the different colours, red, blue or green, would be but an object of ridicule in the eyes of a person who can actually see the colours. To talk about Vedanta without any real self-experience is equally ridiculous. That Guru alone is a true Guru who would lead a disciple to the path of self-experience. But many aspirants fall into the clutches of pseudo-saints who tempt them by holding forth before them the bait that they would get self-experience but ultimately they are disappointed.

They then leave off all Vedanta and religious matters and remain content with merely ordinary morality. Their angle of vision of looking at things and persons entirely changes and they begin to see faults in almost every person.

In my opinion the tendency to find faults is bad from one point of view and good from another. This tendency would be very useful for the purpose of not getting entangled in the snares of hypocrites and pseudo-saints. But if it leads a person to find faults even in real Mahatmas, it is certainly reprehensible. Even food, if not properly taken, may act like poison and do harm, while even poison properly administered in minute quantities sometimes acts like a tonic and cures diseases. Before trying to find faults a person must make himself sure that he has acquired a correct insight and acumen to find out real faults. He must make himself sure that he would not mistake apparent faults for real ones. If a person while examining rice throws away a grain of rice mistaking it for a grain of sand, he cannot be called a wise person.

Hence a person must acquire clear insight; otherwise while trying to find out faults, he might discard virtues also, mistaking them for faults. To consider every thing which is against our ideas as a fault is what I mean by individualistic tendency to find faults. This tendency is very bad and leads to disastrous results. It is at the root of all disturbances in domestic, national and

religious life. A person in fortunate and affluent circumstances looks down even upon a virtuous man who is in adverse circumstances and considers him as full of faults. This is the result of this individualistic tendency.

A false Saint having obtained vast sums of money from others under false pretences, feeds thousands of people, makes a show of his charity and looks down upon a real saint who passes his days in calm contemplation in solitude apart from the haunts of men and taunts him about his poverty. Thus it would be clearly seen that this individualistic tendency to find faults is very bad and leads to ruin. Wise persons should, therefore, take scrupulous care not to fall a prey to it.

The second kind is what I call Social. It is good to a certain extent but on the whole it is more bad than good. Whatever is opposed to the views of a particular society or community is looked upon as a fault by its members. But as the constitution and the underlying principles of every society are different, it is but natural that every society is considered as full of faults by other societies. Besides every individual has some faults in the eyes of his society. Some sociologists tried to make an equal distribution of property among all the members of the society but these attempts signally failed. If a person models his actions on the principle of sacrificing his interests for the good of the society, he is blamed by the members of his family; if on the contrary he looks too much to the interests of his family, he is blamed by the society. Hence the angle of vision, which I have called Social, is very nebulous and puts an individual into a very awkward position - on the horns of a dilemma as it were.

This method of finding faults, however, affords opportunities to some persons for posing as social workers and philanthropists.

The third kind I have called Scriptural or Shastric. This is the best and it conduces to the real welfare of a spiritual aspirant. It consists in considering anything which is opposed to the Shastras as bad. A person who has acquired this angle of vision would never fall a prey to the machinations of self-seeking hypocrites and pseudo-saints, would never allow himself to be overpowered by his society and would ultimately attain the real goal of human life himself and would also help to raise the moral and spiritual standard of the society of which he is a member. But this insight must be obtained at the feet of a Sadguru. Merely by reading the Shastras or by carrying on discussions regarding them, a person can never ascertain what is opposed to the Shastras and what is in consonance with them. If a person reads the Shastras merely in the light of his own reasoning and views, it is but natural that he would accept only those sayings in the Shastras which are favourable to him or interpret them so as to be conformable to his own views.

Suppose a prostitute reads the Bhagwata and draws a lesson from the account given of the Gopis there that the Shastras permit unchastity on the part of women, is there any hope of the character of the prostitute being ever improved by this sort of reading? If the Shastras do not make a change in our views and angle of vision how can they be said to teach us anything? If

guests are served with stale food can it be said that they are treated as guests?

Hence it is necessary to learn what is told in the Shastras at the feet of a Sadguru. It is, however, difficult to know who is a real Sadguru. We find that even many educated men have fallen into the clutches of self-seeking pseudo-saints. The ways of outward conduct too of even really great Saints differ on account of the difference of surroundings and of Prarabdha (destiny). Hence superficial observers are not likely to recognise the greatness of even real saints. Some persons posing as Saints are very clever in giving learned and impressive discourses on Vedanta, while internally they are seeking opportunities to cheat their gullible followers. Real aspirants meeting such saints are ultimately disappointed, because they find that they asked for bread and got a stone in stead. They had wanted real Vedanta and instead they had as it were a lecture on the Science of Sexual Love.

Hence it has been said in the Yoga-Vasishtha that without the grace of God, it is not possible to meet with a real Sadguru. Even to get affectionate parents entirely depends upon the favour of fate. Instances of mothers selling their children for obtaining money for drinking liquor, though rare in India, are not quite uncommon in other countries. A Sadguru must teach Yoga not merely by words but must lead an aspirant to the path of self-experience. The disciple too must know what questions to ask and how to ask them, otherwise everything would be futile.

This is in short what Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has said and I entirely agree with him. A great poet has remarked that it is very difficult to understand the minds of great persons because they are sometimes harder than adamant and sometimes softer than flowers. I am also of opinion that although God is without form, still a Sadhaka should first of all learn to obtain steadiness of mind by contemplating upon some form and then try to grasp God without form.

Now I shall tell you in brief what Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has said regarding Raja-Yoga, miracles and Prema-Samadhi. You might say I am not telling you anything of my own but only what has been said by other Saints. My reply to that is that it is so. My Guru did not teach me Vedanta and the principles established by it and the arguments adduced in books on Vedanta to establish them. He only gave me the mantra "Soham" and showed me the path leading to Brahman which is beyond all Vedanta and arguments. He made me realise the truth of "Tat Twain Asi" (Thou Art That) and said that nothing else was required to be told. Hence I am telling you what other Saints have said. It might be even said that my Guru is speaking through my mouth. Look at it from another point of view also. It has been said that whatever has been said by any one else in the three worlds has been borrowed from Vyas. If that is so, then what wonder is there that an uneducated and unintelligent person like me should borrow from what other Saints have said? I have read a few books on spiritual subjects and tell others a little out of them. I possess no power of words but my real strength lies in understanding the real sense behind the words. Saints like Tukaram and Eknath also did not possess the

power of words to an eminent degree but their strength lay in their thorough grasp of the sense behind the words.

Regarding Prema-Samadhi, Shri Gulabrao Maharaja says :- “If once all our love becomes centred in God, gradually our mind is drawn away from other insignificant objects. But one thing must be remembered. If a person is careful regarding his diet and other bodily necessities and is careless regarding other matters, it cannot be said that his real love is centred in God. We see some devotees of God, who are very careful regarding their food and other bodily necessities but are entirely indifferent in their dealings with the members of their family or towards other things such as dress etc. It cannot be said that they are devotees of God in the real sense of the term. An objector might urge, “Do not devotees of God eat and drink?” I admit that they do eat and drink. But when they are in the state of Prema Samadhi, they do not eat and drink even for days together. When they come back to normal consciousness, they show keenness not only regarding food and drink but regarding all other things. The more they become absorbed in Prema-Samadhi, the less becomes their interest in other matters. Real devotees of God are extremely reluctant to perform miracles, because they think that it is giving trouble to the sole object of their love viz. God. It might be urged as an objection to this that God being omnipotent, how can there be any trouble to Him in bringing about miracles? This objection is all right looked at from the point of persons who follow the path of Knowledge (Jnana Marga) but the mind of a devotee is differently constituted, and to the mind of a devotee, to give the slightest trouble to the object of his love is extremely repugnant. A person who follows the path of knowledge would say that God must help him at every place and on every occasion. A devotee on the other hand dedicates his body, soul and mind to the service of God and does not expect anything in return from God. When the devotee entirely loses himself in his love of God, how can he invoke God to help him in his difficulties? He is not conscious of himself, much less of his difficulties.

Shri Tukaram's following Abhangas express his feelings about Prema-Samadhi :-

“Oh Lord of Rukmini, you are my real relative. May your form be ever present before my eyes. Your form is very sweet and your name is very sweet. Grant me the capacity of loving you always. Tuka says : I am not asking you anything else because all happiness is centred at your feet.”

“Since I began to control my mind and direct it towards you, I am not conscious of anything else. Tuka says : I have identified you with my eyes. Your form is steady on the Veeta i.e. brick (referring to the image of Vithoba).”

In these two Abhangas Shri Tukaram Maharaja has described the external characteristics as well as the internal ones of Prema-Samadhi. With reference to this state the Shastras have laid down that a Saint should be quite peaceful and serene. In the Second Abhanga referred to above Tukaram Maharaja has said that Panduranga is present in his waking as well as his dreaming state. When the devotee is in the actual company of God,

that is known as Jagrita-Samadhi, i.e. Samadhi in the waking state. When that is not so, i.e. when the devotee is separated from God, there is Swapna-Samadhi i.e. Samadhi in the dreaming state. The whole thing means that while the devotee is in his waking state he is in the actual company of God and when he is in sleep he is dreaming about God and is again with Him in the dreaming state.

Shri Tukaram has also described the state of a devotee when he is not in Samadhi. He says : "We, servants of Vishnu, are softer than wax and harder than adamant." At another place he says : "Get up, you whoreson, do not sit in my Kirtan." Many people find fault with such Abhangas. But it must be remembered that these Abhangas are meant to teach people how to behave as members of the society to which they belong, so that their actions they conduce to their own welfare and at the same time may not adversely affect the society. These Abhangas express the Saint's sentiments when he was not in the state of Prema-Samadhi but had regained normal consciousness. The Abhanga, "We, the servants of Vishnu, are softer than wax and harder than adamant," shows how devotees of God are keen and observant in their dealings with the world, when they are not in the state of Prema-Samadhi but in a state of normal consciousness.

The great poet Bhavabhuti too has expressed similar sentiments in his famous verse, "The minds of great men are softer than flowers and harder than adamant," when he was describing the characteristics of Shri Kama.

Regarding Raja-Yoga, Shri Gulabrao Maharaja says : Raja-Yoga is the best of all Yoga practices. Great Yogis like Gorakhnath and others say that Raja-Yoga is difficult, if not impossible, to be achieved without the help of Hatha-Yoga. The Tamasa power of substances which controls the body and the Rajasa power of action controlling the actions of breath and of the organs can be brought under control by the practice of Hatha-Yoga. The practice of Raja-Yoga can control only the impressions produced by the Jnana-Shakti and wipe them off. All this controlling is possible only through two things, viz. (1) Practice and (2) Vairagya i.e. detachment. A person, who merely carries on practice without having Vairagya, does not go to the end and has to leave it in the middle. Because every now and then he is attracted by sensual objects and he gets tired of trying again and again and leaves off practice. To have Vairagya without practice is slightly better, because he does not know how to control the tendencies of the mind and hence till his death he is troubled.

Hence perfect control can be accomplished only with the help of both Practice and Vairagya.

The Tamasa power is brought under control by carefully reading the principles of Vedanta and contemplating upon them. This is known, as "Shravana" and forms part of "Niyama". Through the practice of "Yama" and "Niyama", the Rajasa power of action of the organs is controlled. Asana (postures) leads to the steadiness of limbs and through Pranayama all power of motion is controlled. When this stage is reached the "Mudhawastha" (i.e. the state of infatuation) of the mind disappears. The state of distraction is controlled by Dharana and Dhyana and the Sadhaka then enters the state of

Samprajnata or Savikalpa Samadhi by concentration. This state later on develops into Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This in short is the full course as described in Yoga-Shastra. But this requires great preparation of the mind. Only those who have left off attachment to sensual objects can be the recipients of this knowledge. He alone who first of all subdues the desires of the mind regarding sensual objects, understands their comparative importance or unimportance, keeps his mind in a state of quietude even when enjoying pleasures allowed by the Shastras and ultimately leaves off all sense of enjoyment of pleasures, succeeds in ascending to the summit of Yoga. He who understands how to dispel thoughts which arise in succession in the mind without making the slightest change in his Asana (posture), i.e. he who understands what particular thoughts must first of all be subdued through what particular power, so also he who understands how to contemplate upon Brahman in the interval between the setting of one thought and the rising of another-he alone succeeds in going to the end of Yoga and becoming a master. Many persons think that Bhakti (devotion) is easier than Yoga, owing to the fear for the body which the Yogi has to conquer. But Shri Jnaneshwar says, "Is there anything as easy as Yoga?" I also think that Bhakti which depends upon some external object, is not so easy as Yoga which depends on one's own self. If a person thinks on these questions deeply and gets explanations for himself and then leaves off contemplation of things which fetter him and contemplates upon the opposite, he would succeed in putting an end to all pain and obtain the highest bliss. He should fix his mind upon and thoroughly grasp the principles of Sankhya Shastra that the soul is absolutely free from attachments and then by means of Yoga he should practise meditation. But in every case a Guru is required because without the guidance from a Guru, the real secret cannot be understood independently.

Ordinarily no one likes pain, hence every one desires to end it. We ourselves are dearer to us than any other thing. Things which come in the way of our happiness are disliked by us. We, however, have never any dislike respecting ourselves. Hence it is clear that real bliss lies in ourselves and not in any extraneous thing.

Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has also said something about how to subjugate the mind and ultimately to annihilate it. He says : Shri Vasishtha mentions two means of annihilating the mind. One is to control thoughts of the mind by Yoga and the other is to observe ourself by ourself being the observer. This second is a little bit difficult. The thoughts of the mind can be controlled by the practice of Yoga and by Vairagya. Vairagya can be obtained by getting into the habit of looking upon all worldly things and pursuits as full of faults and troubles. The practice of Yoga is carried on by contemplating upon Ishwar (God). This contemplation is of two kinds, viz., (1) of some divine form which has attributes ; and (2) of That without form which has no attributes. In the beginning a Sadhaka should contemplate upon some divine form like that of Shri Krishna, more beautiful than anything else in the world and serve it with all possible devotion. This meditation serves to annihilate all impressions produced and remaining embedded in the mind by the enjoyment of sensual pleasures in the innumerable lives gone before and also in this life.

Then later on owing to very deep concentration the Dhyata (meditator) becomes one with the Dhyeya (the object of meditation) and enters the Nirguna State. When, however, he comes back to normal consciousness, he feels that the world is real. Suppose a person sees a rope in the darkness and thinking it to be a serpent, runs away from the place. He would not then be able to see it but the impression would still remain upon his mind that he had seen serpent. If, however, he stops at the place, brings a lamp and satisfies himself that it is a rope and not a serpent, all fear vanishes and no impression of the fear also remains on the mind.

Thus knowledge alone is capable of dispelling the fear of the worldly existence. For obtaining this knowledge it is necessary to read religious books, to listen to discourses on them given by the Guru, then to think over them in solitude and when the mind is thoroughly satisfied about the truth of the principles, to ponder over them again and again. The realization of Brahman is to be obtained only by the method of self-experience. An objector might say that everybody knows that. If that is so, then Vasishtha says that every one should always remember it and never be forgetful about it.

Shri Vasishtha says to Rama : "To explain everything properly is the work of the Guru, to grasp it depends upon the aptitude of the disciple."

Many Vedantis think and also say that Sadgurus always seek out good disciples. But Shri Gulabrao Maharaja says, "In the Vedas and the Smritis the various duties of different Varnas have been laid down. There it has been distinctly specified that persons should visit various places of pilgrimage and should try to get into touch with Saints." Hence it clearly appears that spiritual aspirants should seek out saints and for that purpose, if necessary, should visit various places for finding them out and getting into contact with them. It is not, however, true to say that Sadgurus go in search of good disciples. In the Vedanta that person alone is considered as fit to approach a Sadguru who has acquired the four sadhanas but it has nowhere been mentioned that a Sadguru should go in search of a disciple.

Again some say that it is through the grace of God alone that a Sadguru is met with. But Shastras say that no one can obtain the grace of God without guidance from a Guru. Even admitting that the grace of God is necessary in order to be able to meet with a Sadguru, a question arises whether this grace of God can be obtained without making any efforts, merely by chance. To say that no efforts are necessary is entirely opposed to the teaching of the Vedas, while if it is once admitted that efforts are necessary, it practically favours the opposite view, viz., that efforts must be made to meet, with a Sadguru. When persons posing as saints violate the tradition of Varnashrama Dharma (duties laid down to be observed by the different Varnas) and their teachings are followed by ordinary people, God has to take an incarnation for the purpose of again establishing the traditional system for the welfare of the world. He puts out the sinister influence of these false teachings and the old path of gradual progress step by step becomes again clear. If some people say that they cannot put any faith in Yoga, they may be asked why they then put faith in morality. Because morality also does not

conduce to success in this worldly life. Its fruit also is to-be obtained not in this life but in a future life.

Sadhakas of dubious mentality are of three kinds, viz., (1) Those who having no aptitude and mental preparation take initiation from a saint but, as they have no Vairagya, leave off, when they are confronted with adversity ; (2) Those who have some aptitude and mental preparation but do not get a real Sadguru to guide them, are misled by pseudo-saints and then repent and leave off ; and (3) Those, who have acquired all the four Sadhanas but having heard instances of persons being deceived by hypocrites and false saints, become doubtful about approaching a Guru. Out of these three the first are of no use, the second are good kind of people but as they acquire a suspicious mentality, they are likely to give an insult even to real saints. They should remain at home and try to develop the good qualities which they possess. After some time they might get a real Sadguru. At least they would be able to make mental preparation, which may eventually lead to their getting a real Sadguru. But it is only for the third kind of Sadhakas, that a remedy has been mentioned by Patanjali in his Yoga-Sutras (Pada 3, Sutra 34) and also by Shri Vyasa., It is mentioned there that in the light which the Sadhaka sees in his head i.e. in the centre of his brain while in a state of meditation, he gets the, Darshana of perfect saints who dwell on this earth or in Swarga (heaven) or in the intervening space. The important thing in this is that the Sadhaka gets the Darshana of his Sadguru, who then guides him further. This is by far the best method of finding out one's Guru. It might happen by chance in a particular case that a Sadhaka meets with his Sadguru without making any special efforts for seeking him out. But an exception proves the rule and it would not be advisable on the strength of such an instance to leave off all efforts to find out a Sadguru.

It would be as foolish as to leave off going to one's field and working there because some other person by chance suddenly got a buried treasure. Of course if a person thinks that he would be duped by saints, then he should not waste his time in finding out a Guru. I, however, think that a real aspirant cannot be deceived by any false saint. Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has mentioned this idea (viz. necessity of seeking out a Sadguru) again and again in his works and I thoroughly agree with him. Shri Tukaram Maharaja also says the same thing in the following Abhanga :-

“The fire does not assiduously call any one to come near it for getting warm. He who is shivering with cold himself goes near it for getting warmth. Does water ever say, ‘Please come and drink me?’ A person who is thirsty runs to it and satisfies his thirst. Will the Lord of Tuka ever say ‘Remember me in order’ to be saved?”

In the Upanishads also it has been said that an aspirant should approach a Saint who has attained self-realization and is also capable of leading aspirants on the spiritual path, with proper offerings and then get initiation from him leading to the knowledge of self.

Well, my good Sir, as I have not been educated and have also very little natural intelligence, I have to borrow from the sayings of other saints and learned men, who are far superior to me in knowledge and erudition. If I explain things in my own simple way as inspired by my Guru, people would not put faith in me. Hence I tell people a little of what has been told to me by others or of what I have read myself. To listen to it or to give any importance to it entirely lies with the people. Hence I have told you a little of what Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has said and which has appealed to me as true. If any aspirant wants to go deep into these questions, he should himself read the letters of Shri Gulabrao Maharaja which have been published. As I am not a Maharaja and have no ability to answer such deep questions, I have told you what Shri Gulabrao Maharaja says about them, in many cases having borrowed his own words. I myself am an ignorant fool.

Regarding miracles Shri Gulabrao Maharaja says : Some happening is felt as a miracle by a particular individual quite independently of how others take it and many a time miracles occur in the case of an individual according to his previous Karma. Very rarely a miracle is performed which is meant for all and appeals to all. Some persons might raise a doubt regarding my favourite God and ideal Shri Krishna having swallowed the forest fire in Gokul by pointing out that Shri Krishna ran away through fear of Kalayavana. Then what of me? Some persons might say regarding the famous Rasa-Krida, that Shri Krishna must have dressed up his innumerable companions as himself and all these companions then danced with the various Gopis and that this famous Rasa-Krida was an immoral incident altogether in which boys and girls carried on their amours.

If such objections are raised neither myself, nor my father, nor my grand-father, nor even Shri Vyasa himself would be able to answer them satisfactorily. If Shri Rama had real Vairagya at the time when he heard the discourse of Vasishtha on the knowledge of Brahman, then what was the reason of his embracing the trees in the forest calling them his wife? If, as it is alleged, the trees were Rishis and Shri Rama purified and saved them by his embrace, then where was the objection to embrace them by calling them his mother? If he knew for certain that his wife Sita was chaste and pure, why did he abandon her and send her to the forest merely on hearing rumours about what people were saying about her? When Narada asked for one wife, he himself was turned into a woman and thus taught a lesson by Shri Krishna. But when Shri Krishna himself and his innumerable companions spoiled thousands of others' wives, where were these moral principles then? If Shri Shankaracharya was the incarnation of Shri Shankar Himself, where was the necessity for him of entering into the body of another for getting experience of sexual enjoyment for the purpose of being able to answer questions asked to him on that subject? Had he no experience of sexual enjoyment with Uma when he was embodied as Shri Shankar? Shri Shankar took the form of a Sharabha and attacked Shri Nrisinha, then can it be said that Shri Shankar and Vishnu love each other? How did both of them become so extremely hard hearted on that occasion? It has been written in Kashi-Khanda that owing to some action in the previous births, Shri Vyasa had to take the birth of an ass, then why can it not be said that owing to some bad actions in their previous

lives of the people in this world, Shri Vyasa was made by destiny to propound altogether wrong principles? It is not absolutely impossible for a boy of eight years, as Shri Krishna, then was, to possess the power of sexual enjoyment, as milk is considered as powerful aphrodisiac even in the case of children and old persons by eminent writers on medicine like Charaka and it is well known that Shri Krishna was given milk and butter by his mother Yashoda many times in a day. He also used to steal butter and eat it with his companions. If Shri Krishna's incarnation was for the establishment of religion and the worship of Gods, why did he object to the worship of Indra and interrupt and frustrate it?

Much has been made of the incident of lifting up of the Govardhan Hill. But how can it be said that Shri Krishna might have previously fixed under the hill some machinery with a spring? If the love of Gopis for Shri Krishna exceeded that of all others, then why did they not leave Gokul and follow him to Mathura? Even if we leave aside Gopis who had been married, at least those who had observed the Katyayani vow for getting Shri Krishna for their husband ought to have followed him. If these latter Gopis later on married other husbands, can it not be said that they led unchaste and impure lives and how can this fact be reconciled with the eulogies heaped upon them for their devotion? The Brahmins who refused to give food to Shri Krishna and his companions have been considered as worthless, while their wives who gave the food have been lauded to the skies.

All such stories help pseudo-saints to attract and dupe their female disciples. If all such incidents have to be treated as merely the sports of the Divine, then why should we not consider the amours of ordinary vicious people as also their sports? By the application or misapplication of the principles of Vedanta even the sexual intercourse between a dog and a bitch can be glorified. Why then so much should be made of the Rasa-Krida?

In this manner thousands of objections can be raised and I have no logical answer to offer for refuting any of them. Once a pleader asked Shri Gulabrao Maharaja why like Shri Vasudevananda Saraswati he did not perform any miracles. Many friends ask me the same question and the reply which I give to them is similar to the reply given by Shri Gulabrao Maharaja, which is briefly given below :-

“People talking about miracles say many strange things. The miracles which have been reported by the disciples of Shri Vasudevananda Saraswati, who is a strict follower of the Vedic religion, to have been performed by him appear to be closely similar to miracles reported to have been performed by Mahomedan Fakirs, who follow a religion the tenets of which are quite opposed to the Vedic religion. The miracles too do not appear to have taken place in the sight of all people at all places and on all occasions. If however, people are to put their faith in small miracles, then some persons tell about some miracles which have occurred at my hands also. Shri Vasudevananda Saraswati does not perform miracles which would appeal to all nor does he perform them in all places. Similar is the case with miracles reported about me. I do not mean to say that miracles are absolutely of no use. I only say that

no one should boast of miracles performed by his Guru and taunt others that their Guru has not got the power to work similar miracles. Mohammedans never worship the Hindu Gods for the cure of their diseases. They depend only upon their "Turbat". Many Hindus on the other hand go to Mohammedan Saints, though they might be butchers by profession. The Shaligram (a black stone worshipped as household deity by many Hindu families) in our house does not perform any miracle and we have to run to Mohammedan Saints, What greater wonder is there than this!

"Occasionally miracles do occur at the hands of great saints and they do occur at my hands also on some occasions. They might occur even at your hands sometimes. The disciples of Shri Vasudevanada Saraswati have no feelings of respect for me, but they show great reverence towards Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi and also towards Tajuddin Baba who eats mutton. I always express sentiments of respect regarding Shri Vasudevananda, Saraswati. I, therefore, cannot understand why his disciples express feelings of disrespect towards me."

Now, Sir, in my case also (i.e. Gajanana Maharaja's case) many miracles occurred naturally and many persons criticised me saying that I had learnt evil charms and that I abused men and Women. If I could turn liquor into milk why should I not be able to turn all liquor into water of the Ganges? They also criticised me by pointing out that many a time I did not even wash my mouth, that I did not know anything about the Shastras and that I indulged in ridiculing and finding faults with other saints. I have only to say in reply to such criticisms that I know that many people blamed me in the past, many blame me at present and many would blame me in the future. My external conduct too is such that it would be but natural for people to blame me. This is not a thing to be talked about but somehow or other I felt inclined to tell you about it. If any person censures me in the presence of one of my friends, it is but natural that he should be pained. A son does not like to hear his father censured nor does a father like his son to be censured in his presence. But I request all my friends, brothers and sisters not to allow themselves to be pained. As stated in the famous verse of the Geeta (XIII. 7), "Amanittwam" i.e. a dislike for approbation is the key-note of my conduct. I purposely act in such a manner that people should censure me. The famous verse in the Geeta (XII. 19) which says : "That person of a devotional mind is very dear to me, to whom censure and praise are one, who observes silence, who is satisfied with whatever falls to his lot, who has no fixed abode and whose mind is absolutely steady," is worth being inscribed in letters of gold. Miracles which occasionally happen are meant to help worldly people. For spiritual progress, they are absolutely of no use. Hence Shri Tukaram Maharaja says :-

"The stony mountains may be turned into gold. All ordinary trees in the forests may be turned into celestial trees. Repetition of mantras and charms may be performed and vows observed. The breath may be carried to the centre of the brain. Indra, Chandra and even Brahmadeva, Vishnu and Shiva may serve one like servants. But the feet of Shri Krishna are very difficult to be attained. All these things are of no use then. Tuka says : I have made a firm determination, Oh my God, to always remember thy feet."

In this Abhanga Shri Tukaram has expressed his strong repugnance in respect of miracles. In another Abhanga he says :-

“One should have a neighbour who is always censuring one, because owing to the censure a person can know what his faults are. A censurer is very dear to me like a talisman because he contributes a great deal towards my real welfare.”

Those who praise a Saint who has realised self get a share of his merit, those who censure him get a share of his sins. His sons and grandsons get his estate. He himself however, is beyond virtue and sin and is always merged in the highest bliss which is eternal and which is absolutely pure.

In the Kaushitaki Upanishad it has been mentioned that a Brahmanishtha (a saint who has attained self-realization) should have sons. Now just tell me whether I should act according to my Sad guru's orders and follow in the foot-steps of other saints or I should perform miracles in order to impress worldly people. Shri Kabir says :-

“A censurer is very dear to me, even dearer than my parents, he gets himself drowned and takes me across.”

Looking to all such sayings of great saints, I am absolutely convinced that it is not at all necessary that I should perform miracles or that people should call me a Saint. Hence I say to my friends that if anybody censures me in their presence, they should not be pained. A story is told regarding Tukaram Maharaja that a widow in the village became pregnant and the fatherhood of the child was attributed to him and he was made by the people to sit upon a donkey with garlands of old shoes round his neck and taken in procession through the streets and he was abused and censured by many people. I have not as yet been put to that test but through the grace of God I wish that I might be. I do not know when this desirable event would happen. I am waiting for it.

Gentleman :- It is said that Saints have absolutely no desires. If that is so, then why should there be instances of Saints indulging in illicit intercourse? I myself have seen one such instance. Maharaja, what is your opinion regarding this?

Maharaja :- Gold should be once tested and when it is found to be real, no further doubts should be entertained regarding its genuineness. When a diamond has to be fixed in a gold ring, it becomes necessary to add some inferior substance to the gold in order to fix it. Does that in any way detract from the real value of the gold? Similarly a real Mahatma sometimes does some acts which are opposed to the ordinary ideas of morality, owing to some unknown connections of his previous births. But that does not detract from his saintliness or his self-realization. If you will read the book “Brahma Siddhanta Mala”, you will understand the subject properly. Of course false saints might take advantage of such a doctrine and try to justify their immoral actions in the

same way. But it cannot be helped. Such things are bound to go on in his world.

Gentleman :- Maharaja, if an aspirant has the seeds of some disease in his body unknown to him, will he be able to make progress in Yoga ?

Maharaja:- A real saint who wants to initiate such an aspirant must first of all by his internal vision examine the state of that aspirant's body and then ask him to concentrate on that centre in the body which is free from all disease. The aspirant then will be able to make progress in Yoga. If this care is not taken, the Saint who initiates him will begin to suffer from that disease. This has been my experience and I think all Yogis, who have initiated others on the Yoga Path, must have had a similar experience. In this case also false saints, when they suffer from any diseases may show off that they have taken upon themselves the diseases of their disciples.

III

Conversation between Maharaja and Mr. Ambadas Gopal
Paithankar of Nasik at the time of and after his initiation
as narrated by Mr. Paithankar

Owing to a particular incident I was convinced of the greatness of Shri Gajanana Maharaja and then came into a familiar contact with him. I give below the facts in detail. It was the last week of April 1940. I was then sitting in the house of my dear friend Mr. D. K. Bhat. Mr. Bhat was telling me about Shri Gajanana Maharaja and also describing his own spiritual experiences. I was all the while listening to him in rapt attention. Then my friend began propounding abstruse principles of Vedanta which were a little beyond my powers of comprehension. He was talking about Atma Prachiti, Guru Prachiti and Shashtra Prachiti. My mind, however, was thinking about one topic alone and that was Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I was merely physically hearing words uttered by Mr. Bhat without comprehending their sense.

About six or seven years prior to this, I had once seen Shri Gajanana Maharaja and after that had heard various accounts, good or bad, about him. I held a very unfavourable opinion about him and I always referred to him contemptuously. But on that day while I was listening to Mr. Bhat's account of him and of his own spiritual experiences, I had got completely engrossed in the subject and found that my unfavourable opinion about Shri Gajanana Maharaja was taking a turn and that slowly a very favourable impression was making itself felt. The following thing then happened. I cannot call it anything less than a miracle.

While I was outwardly hearing Mr. Bhat's description of Atma Prachiti, etc., my mind was internally deeply absorbed in one idea and that was Shri Gajanana Maharaja. All my thoughts and ideas as it were became merged in one another and a dense darkness spread over the whole room. I became terribly afraid. I could not see Mr. Bhat, also. Immediately, however, a light like that of millions of moons, appeared of itself and in that light I could distinctly

see a face oval in shape. That face then disappeared and its place was taken by the form of an old personage of dazzling appearance. I experienced a feeling of extraordinary joy mixed with a slight fear. The feeling was so wonderful that I cannot adequately describe it in words. Then everything disappeared. I was about to ask questions to Mr. Bhat when Mr. Bhat himself asked me, "Ambadas, why did you just now appear to be in a dumbfounded condition? I was describing to you things about Shri Gajanana Maharaja and you were looking fixedly at something like a madman. Whom were you meditating upon?" I replied, "I was not meditating upon any one. My mind was deeply engrossed in thinking about that very worthy personage, your Guru, regarding whom you were talking." Then I described to Mr. Bhat the vision which I had seen. He told me to see Shri Gajanana Maharaja himself who alone would be able to throw light on it.

But as I am naturally of a non-believing tendency and also am given to plain-speaking, I decided not to go to see Gajanana Maharaja without making full inquiries and satisfying myself. However, on that day, the form of Shri Gajanana Maharaja did not disappear from before my mind's eye. While performing Sandhya, or taking my bath or doing ordinary routine work, my mind was incessantly thinking of only one thing viz. the individuality of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I was also enjoying a unique peace, never felt in my life before.

I then went to another of my friends, Mr. Bapusaheb Saigaonkar, the photo-artist. I knew that he had received initiation from Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I said to him, "For the last about twelve or thirteen years Gajanana Maharaja is staying near you. Many Brahmins, some pensioners of advanced years and many other educated persons visit him. I have also heard from several persons at Nasik that he is a Dhyana-Yogi of self-realization. I wish to know your opinion regarding him." Mr. Saigaonkar instead of answering my question asked me whether I had personally seen Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I replied, "I had once seen him five or six years before. There was a Kirtan at his place and I had been there."

Mr. Saigaonkar :- What has happened during the last few days that you should be so anxious to see him? Have you had any special experience? Besides anybody is quite at liberty to see him at any time.

I did not give any reply to this and took leave of Mr. Saigaonkar. I thought, "Where is the necessity of any Dalal or agent in order to see Maharaja? Why should I not go and see him myself?"

Accordingly next day at about 9 a.m. I went to Maharaja's house. He was then ill and was lying down. He looked at me and asked me whom I wanted to see. I replied, "Yourself."

Maharaja :- What is your work with me ?

Myself :- I have not any particular business. I only wanted to have your Darshana.

Maharaja :- What is your name? Will you give me some information about yourself?

Myself:- My name is Ambadas. My father's name is Gopalbuwa and my surname is Paithankar. My father performs Kirtana and has studied the Shastras well. I have studied up to the Matriculation. Mr. D. K. Bhat, who comes to you, and myself were studying together in the same class. He passed the Matriculation while I did not. I often go to him.

Maharaja :- What profession do you follow ?

Myself:- I do not follow any profession. I have read a good many Shastras with my father, I also know a little of astrology. I usually go with my father when he performs his Kirtans and accompany him in singing devotional songs.

Maharaja :- Have you ever gone for the Darshana of any Saints ?

Myself:- Yes. I have taken the Darshana of Shri Upasani Maharaja and of Shri Narayan Maharaja of Kedgaon.

Maharaja :- For what purpose?

Myself:- Once Shri Narayan Maharaja had called many Kirtankars to Kedgaon. I too had been invited and had gone there. But I got no chance of performing a Kirtan. However on the last day when all these Kirtankars had to be given remuneration, it happened that I was the first person called before him by Shri Narayan Maharaja. He asked me whether I had performed a Kirtana and I falsely replied in the affirmative. But it appeared that he understood what was really in my mind. He, however, gave, me handsome remuneration and I was greatly pleased.

Maharaja :- Do you ever practise meditation or worship any particular Deity?

Myself :- I do not worship any particular deity or meditate upon it. For about three years I worshipped Shri Ganapati, then for about two years the Goddess. For some days I was trying to concentrate my attention on a particular point (Bindu). Then I left that off also. As I had no desire to obtain any particular object in doing all these things, I naturally left them off in course of time.

Maharaja :- You have got the good company of your father and in his company you also sing devotional songs. Your mind, therefore, must have been greatly prepared for spiritual things. Then how is it that you worship one deity for some time and then leave it for another and then leave that for a third? Are you going to do so till the end of your life? Or are you going to continue this process in your future lives also?

Myself :- I can't fix my mind anywhere. I have got to look after my family and children. I have also to work as a priest. Hence I cannot fix my mind on a

particular course or deity. Hence I have come to a Saint like you. The desire to take your Darshana might have been generated in me perhaps by the good company of my father and by the devotional sentiments which I always hear in this Kirtans or perhaps it might have been generated by some sudden rise of faith in my mind through God's grace. Although I cannot account for it exactly, I have come to you and I earnestly request you to confer your grace upon me. I have not come to you through mere blind faith because it is not in my nature to put such blind faith in anyone. I have tested my feelings on the touch stone of deep thought and only when I was fully confident of myself that I ventured to come to you.

Maharaja, I am now thoroughly convinced that a knowledge of the Shastras only teaches a man to enter into endless discussions and to raise innumerable doubts. I now firmly believe that the only true Shashtra is that of self-experience, which I know cannot be obtained without the grace of a Sadguru.

Maharaja, will you grant me the vision of God?

Maharaja :- Just see. Suppose you have a lighted lantern in your house and I ask you to bring and show its light to me here. Will you be able to bring the light here and show it to me?

Myself:- No. The light cannot be brought here.

Maharaja :- Then you would say to me, "I shall at the most be able to tell you what particular means are required and what particular action is to be done in order to generate the light." You would ask me to purchase a lantern, fix a wick in it, put kerosene oil in it, to strike a match, to ignite the wick etc. Then there would be light. Paithankar, similarly it is not an easy thing to show God. I may tell you in what way you should conduct yourself. When you will be endowed with all the four Sadhanas, or when your desires have vanished, or when you are full of devotion or when your mind is fully detached from all worldly objects and you get knowledge of spiritual matters, you will be able to realize the presence of God who is really without form. You will then be able to see the light of the soul and be one with that Entity which is self-existent, which is Life and which is Bliss. That is the real God. God is not an external object which can be shown by simply pointing a finger towards it. A person must get initiation from a Sadguru by obtaining his grace. Then when he gets the internal sight, he can visualise God not by the physical eyes but by this internal sight which is known as the eye of knowledge. A person's egoism must entirely disappear, his desires must all vanish, he must have complete Vairagya (detachment) and he must feel that he is one with God. Then quite naturally he attains everlasting peace and joy. His whole worldly life will be nothing but Brahman. He would go beyond pain and pleasure. I shall give you an everyday illustration. Suppose some night you get very sound sleep. When you get up next morning you say to others, "For the last month or so. I did not get good sleep. But last night I got such a sound and deep sleep that I was greatly delighted." Now just see. If you were in deep sleep, how can you say that you got sound sleep? Who was awake in that state? Had you seen who

was awake in that state? Who enjoyed the bliss of sleep and who is now describing his feelings in that state?

Myself:- I myself.

Maharaja :- This "I" is present in each and everything, even in the minutest atom of dust. It is your Soul. Know it. Through continuous meditation on the idea of "Soham" (I am He) be one with that soul which itself is the Supreme Soul. I cannot tell you anything beyond this. This God is in my heart, similarly he is in your heart also. When through the grace of Guru and through the Japa of "Soham" you will get the internal sight, you will be able to understand everything.

Now I shall tell you a story which will prove to you the power of this God whose abode is in the heart.

Once there lived a lady who was a Patiwrata (devoted to her husband). A man who had an evil desire for her, finding her alone in a secluded spot, caught hold of her and said to her, "Tell me, who will protect you now?" She replied, "Oh, you base man, why do you desire me having come upon me in this lonely spot, when you have a wife of your own? Although you cannot see my husband here in the human form with your physical eyes, still in my heart my husband, who is none other than my soul, is always awake. How can you then do evil to me? I have got in me the power of the Everlasting. That power is always awake in the hearts of all men and women. Only it has to be recognised and realised through the grace of Guru by men and through devotion to their husbands by women." That base man said, "Enough of this Vedanta. I know that there is no God who will protect you nor will any brave and adventurous person come here at this time to defend you." She calmly replied, "My God is in your heart. He is also in your eyes. Your eyes have now become red through feelings of lust. Cast off that feeling of lust and direct your sight inwards towards your heart and you will be able to see my God there." These words of that holy lady had a peculiar effect upon that man. He began to feel a burning sensation throughout his body. His evil desire then disappeared and he began to experience a feeling of deep calm. He then fell at her feet and said, "You are my mother. Out of your great love, pardon me for all my faults." Through the great power of her purity that evil-minded man got a shock in his heart which was purged of all evil and he saw God there.

When Maharaja stopped speaking, I told him about the vision which I had seen two days before at the house of Mr. Bhat and said, "Maharaja, I see in you what I have never seen before and I hear things explained by you in a manner never heard by me before."

Maharaja :- What you say is true. Remove aside the curtain of fear. Leave off all doubts and misgivings and fall at the feet of Saints with feelings of entire submission. If an ignorant and uneducated man goes to a Saint of self-realisation, he quietly turns towards him and becomes one with him. That means that his Jiva quickly merges in Siva. He recognises that his own self is nothing but the Supreme Soul by continuous practice of meditation and

experiences unlimited bliss and joy. The case of a learned and educated man, on the other hand, is different. There are many doubts and arguments warring in his mind and he takes a long time in becoming one with Siva. He is doubtful whether this is true or that is true. His mind is, therefore, fickle. If, however, he leaves off all doubts and practises with intensity what has been taught to him by his Guru, he also without difficulty would attain everlasting happiness. In that stage all distinction between an educated and an uneducated man disappears. This distinction is there as long as doubts and misgivings are there.

Myself :- I have got a keen desire that you should confer your grace upon me and initiate me and take me under your protection.

Maharaja :- Through the grace of my Guru I got the "Soham" Mantra and I am at present in the Sadhaka State. I am not authorised to advise Brahmins like you. But my Guru speaks through my mouth. The words that I utter are not really mine. My Sadguru told me to repeat "Soham" internally and then to get the idea of "Soham" merged into the Supreme Soul and enjoy eternal peace and joy. If this is done I myself would become one with the self-existent, eternal and blissful Principle and experience the presence of that Supreme Soul everywhere. I would then become perfect, leave off all egoism and realize the real "I". In the end even this would be forgotten. I have been ordered by my Guru to initiate anyone, educated or ignorant, rich or poor, fit or unfit, who happens to come to me, to preach openly in the presence of all and at any time. He told me that I would meet different kinds of souls having different desires and different impressions of previous lives, but all would be benefited by me in the spiritual or worldly matters according to their attitude and their faith in me, without any conscious efforts on my part. Even if I know every thing, I have been ordered by him not to allow my thoughts to dwell upon the knowledge but to keep myself entirely detached. I have, therefore, laid all pain and pleasure at the feet of my Guru. I, however, tell what I know to those who come to me and I do that according to the orders of my Guru. If a Sadhaka practises Dhyana Yoga with intensity, I am sure in this very life he would reach the state of perfection through the power of the "Soham" Mantra.

I was listening to these nectar-like words of Maharaja with avidity and rapt attention. My mind experienced a feeling of deep calm. Two days later Maharaja granted me the "Soham" Mantra and took me under his protection. Since then I go for Maharaja's Darshana almost every day. Having a curiosity to know many things, I have asked Maharaja various questions and he has given very lucid explanations regarding them. Some of these discourses are given here as I found them very instructive.

Myself :- There are many Shastras and religious books in this world. Will you kindly mention a few, reading of which would be beneficial in every family?

Maharaja :- I recommend Mahendra's "Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna", "Sampradaya-Surataru" of Shri Gulabrao Maharaja, "Siddhanta Samhita" of Shri Shirobanath and three books written by Dr. Vaidya of Islampur, viz., (1)

Devayana Pantha ; (2) Shatchakrabheda (going through the Six Plexuses) ; (3) Pranavopasana (second edition) ; and (4) Brahma-Sidhantamala by Baba Garde. I have asked you to read these books because you might have already read many Shastras in company of your father; but these books may be read by all, ignorant as well as wise, by educated people, by devotees, by aspirants for spiritual progress. If women or men, old as well as young, read these books and after having performed their worldly duties, they carry on spiritual practice as described in these books in their leisure hours, I think they too would be greatly benefited and would get occasional glimpses of the divine bliss by gradually acquiring powers of concentration. After reading these books and after having carried on practice for some time according to the instructions given therein, if people go for the Darshana of some Saint on hearing of his reputation from others, they would not be deceived by him even though he might be a false saint; because these people would be guided by their own experiences, and would be able to find out the truth or otherwise of what that false saint tells them.

Myself:- I have only recently read the second edition of Pranavopasana. It contains very good instructions for practising meditation. I have, however, one doubt on this point. Up to this time I have asked you various questions and you have kindly given answers which have completely satisfied me. Maharaja, suppose a false saint reads this Pranavopasana and advises ignorant persons to practise meditation on the lines mentioned in that book and these persons get a few experiences, would not the false saint be able to deceive other educated simple-minded persons, devotees and aspirants on the strength of the few experiences got by some of his followers? Similarly if a false saint reads Vedanta carefully and is able to explain it well, how can we find out that he has no self-experience and then warn our friends not to be entangled in his snares?

Maharaja : Paithankar, you have asked a very good question. This question can be answered only by a person who has self-experience. I have read lives of some saints and hence I say with some assurance that these books viz. (1) Devayana Pantha and (2) Pranavopasana should be read, because they contain a description of experiences which are obtained by real saints. When a disciple gets initiation at the hands of his Sadguru and begins to practise meditation, he sees various visions which are as it were sign-posts on the path of self-realization. As he proceeds he goes beyond these visions and realises the Brahman which is behind these visions. If a false saint merely having read these books gives directions to others to practise meditation and a Sadhaka gets some experiences owing to his firm faith, he would be able to compare his experiences with those mentioned in these books; because many saints who had self-realization wrote down their experiences to serve as a guidance to others and these books contain a description of such experiences.

In my opinion there should be no difficulty in finding out whether the particular saint is true or false. All experiences which a Sadhaka gets are not given in detail in these books. Only a general direction how to practise meditation and some important experiences are mentioned. Hence a false

saint would not be able to give any explanation regarding experiences obtained by a Sadhaka which are not mentioned in the books and his ignorance regarding such experiences would naturally expose him.

Besides, one can see the various questionable actions of male and female devotees in the Maths of false saints. These false saints amass large estates and there are sometimes civil suits and criminal complaints going on in Courts concerning them. Did Tukaram or Ramdas or Jnaneshwar do anything of this sort? They on the contrary looked upon women and wealth as hell. Hence I say that people should read the lives of saints. People who are well versed in the Shastras perhaps think it derogatory to their dignity to read the lives of saints. If a grown up man takes up a book belonging to a school boy merely by way of fun or out of curiosity to see whether it contains any new topic or story, I do not think that it would in any way lessen the worth and capability of the grown up man.

If false saints pose themselves as true ones, it would be after all nothing but acting. There cannot be any power in their words as is to be found in the words of real saints. A man may put on the garb of a soldier or a warrior but he cannot acquire the quality of bravery thereby. A man may put on the saffron robe of a Sannyasin but he cannot acquire thereby Vairagya (detachment) which is the main quality of a real Sannyasin.

Myself:- We many a time see people calling themselves Raja-Yogis. My idea of a Raja-Yogi is that his mind has turned inwards and he is full of bliss in every state, whether he is in a state of contemplation or is doing external worldly and physical actions. Please tell me your ideas about this point.

Maharaja :- What you say is quite correct. But there are some saints like Ranganath Swami, who are real Brahmanishthas and still outwardly appear to enjoy worldly prosperity. They live like kings. Their mind, however, is inwardly enjoying the bliss of Brahman. As a result of the actions done in previous lives or owing to the sweet will of destiny, worldly prosperity comes to them without any desire for it on their part. They are absolutely indifferent about it. At present, however, Raja-Yoga has been given an altogether different meaning. This is a typical instance of how things are misinterpreted. Present day saints obtain vast amounts of money from ignorant people through various pretexts, build bungalows for themselves, acquire estates, wear costly clothes, eat sumptuous dishes, are surrounded by groups of beautiful female devotees, in short, indulge in unrestrained behaviour and call themselves Raja-Yogis. I can only say that it is a sad misfortune of the people that such persons of reprehensible conduct pass off as Raja-Yogis.

Myself :- Maharaja, I am thoroughly satisfied with the explanation given by you. I wish to ask a question regarding the practice of meditation. Any person, who brings before his mind's eye the form of a particular deity or of his Guru and contemplate upon it, would be able to see that deity or his Guru with his eyes shut. Similarly rivers, hills, seas can be brought before the mind's eye. I want to know what sort of benefit would be got from such

practices. Books propounding methods of the practice of meditation lay down that an aspirant should bring before his mind's eye Shri Krishna or Om or a small point and worship it mentally. Then where is the necessity of a Sadguru?

Maharaja :- What you say is true. Great saints have laid down that in the beginning one must try to bring the form of a deity etc. before the mind's eye, in other words, to imagine, that the form is before one. But this direction is given to mere beginners. I have explained this subject to many of my friends up to this time and the topic is not a new one. Still I must satisfy you and solve your doubts. Many non believers used to ask the same sort of questions to some of my friends who not being well read, could not answer the questions satisfactorily. My friends had real experiences but got rather non-plussed by such questions and used to come to me for the solution of the difficulty. I told them that if any one asked them such questions they should keep quiet saying that they did not know anything or should leave the place but that they should not allow their minds to be disturbed or confounded by such questions. Now the real answer to such a question is this. It is true, no doubt, that deities which have been imagined are perishable. They would disappear after some time. But if a person's internal sight is opened these very deities become full of light. A Sadguru is required to grant this internal sight. It is only when a Sadguru puts the collierium of his grace in the eyes of his disciple that this internal sight is obtained. Although all these visions, even though seen by the internal sight, are after all a play of ideas, still when they ultimately disappear, they leave behind the Light of Brahman and the aspirant enters into the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. All ideas are absent in that state and the object of Dhyana Yoga is to acquire this state in which ideas or thoughts are entirely absent. When all ideas stop Brahman is experienced. There is then no necessity of making any further conscious efforts but this state is automatically reached.

The following illustration will give you a clear idea of what I say. As long as the musk-deer does not know that the musk is its own navel, it runs here and there trying to find out the source of the fragrant smell. If the deer would meet a Guru who would point out that the source of the smell is in the deer's own navel, would the deer then run here and there? Similarly, Saints tell an aspirant in the beginning to imagine these things, then later on grant him the internal sight and when ultimately the internal visions also disappear, the aspirant gets the experience that he himself is Brahman and becomes merged in the bliss of self. The ignorant human soul takes its birth and questions, "Who am I?" But originally this human soul was full of knowledge and was one with the Supreme Soul. A Sadguru gives answer to the human soul's question, "Who am I?" by telling him the mantra "Soham" (I am He) and having thoroughly convinced the human soul that it is one with the Supreme Soul, takes the human soul back to its original state of knowledge and bliss.

Myself:- Maharaja, all my doubts have now been solved.

Maharaja:- Paithankar, now go on practising meditation as told. Do not, like the musk-deer, wander about seeking outside for what is really in

yourself. Do not ask any further questions. You have now only to get self-experience by carrying on the practice of meditation steadily. If, however, after practising meditation as told by me, you do not get any experience, you may go to any other Guru who might be able to give you proper guidance and make you attain the goal of human life. I only want to urge that you should now leave off all doubts and begin to practise meditation.

Myself:- Maharaja, on the very day on which I came to you, I decided to make you my Guru. That decision still holds and is not likely to be changed.

Maharaja :- Paithankar, I have firm faith in my Sadguru and I have got full experience in this very body of the power of "Soham". I, therefore, never tell any of my friends to bring the forms of deities before their mind's eye but give them the mantra "Soham" and turn their minds inwards, owing to which all ideas become merged in the Sahasradala. While going towards the Sahasradala, some visions in the form of light do manifest themselves and the mental worship which is then performed is not the imaginary one but actually visualised by the internal sight. All these visions appear without any effort and they are full of light. After some time all these visions merge into the soul and the aspirant gets for a short time into the state of Samadhi, and experiences great joy. Saints of old like Jnaneshwar, Eknath, Tukaram and others and comparatively modern saints like Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa or Vivekananda who had all realised self, enjoyed the state of Sahaja Samadhi even while carrying on worldly actions.

My friends experience the same state of Sahaja Samadhi, though for a short time, for a minute or two. As the practice of meditation increases in intensity, this state of Samadhi lasts longer and longer, and ultimately becomes continuous without any limitation of time or space.

Myself:- Maharaja, if a disciple while carrying on the practice of meditation falls ill, is there an interruption in his practice ?

Maharaja :- No, on the contrary, when he falls ill naturally he eats very little food and has to observe certain restrictions in his diet, owing to which all his internal organs become pure and naturally he gets absorbed in the visions of light in meditation and easily enters the Sahasradala and remains steady there. When, however, he again comes to his normal consciousness he becomes conscious of his disease, takes medicine like ordinary patients until he regains his former health.

Myself:- Do all your disciples to whom you have given the Mantra of "Soham" see visions of light ?

Maharaja:- Some do see them while some do not. Those who repeat "Soham" with very great intensity, become at once merged in the sound. Hence they are unconscious of any visions of light. Some of my friends, therefore, who get merged in sound do not see any visions. If you do not see any visions, you should not on that account entertain any doubts regarding the efficacy of "Soham". For this purpose I have made this point clear.

Myself:- Among all your disciples, who are the best ?

Maharaja :- Paithankar, I can only say that as I do not consider myself as anybody's Guru, I do not look upon anyone as my disciple. Some of my young and old friends, owing to their merit acquired in previous lives and owing to the practice of meditation have reached the state of Samadhi. But I do not consider any of them as my disciples. When a real Mumukshu who is thoroughly disgusted with the worldly existence would come to me, I shall be his Guru and he will be my real disciple. At present, however, through the grace of my Sadguru, I simply give the mantra of "Soham" to my friends and ask them to practise meditation.

Myself:- Supposing that through the reading of religious books or through some other cause a person gets the actual Darshana of Shri Krishna, or of the Goddess or of any other deity, is it of any benefit to him?

Maharaja:- It is not of any real use. As long as the mind is not turned inwards and as long as desires have not entirely vanished these external appearances are of very little use. All these appearances are illusory like the mirage. Until a Sadhaka gets initiation from a Sadguru, all these appearances are useless. Shri Pandurang was actually talking with Namadeva and eating food from his hand. Still it was only when Namadeva got initiation from Visoba Khechar that he became really blessed. Up to that time all these conversations with Shri Pandurang were of very little use. Similarly if a person actually sees Shri Krishna or any other deity, it is merely an appearance and not of much use.

Myself:- What is meant by "Shabda-Brahma"?

Maharaja:- The reason why "Shabda" (i.e. word) is called Brahman is that "Shabda" is a means leading to Brahman and hence it is desirable to look upon "Shabda" as Brahman. It is a sort of sentiment or feeling. Shri Vidyanaraya also says similarly. The all comprehensiveness of "OM" has been described, as it is useful for meditation and not because it is true. The all pervading nature of Brahman on the other hand has been described both because it is true and because it is also useful for meditation. Shri Shankaracharya in his Bhashya also has explained this point similarly. Letters which are pronounced or read die out every moment and hence they are incapable of conveying the sense to the intellect. But there is something unknown, a power residing in the intellect which is called "Sphota", which connects the letters together and conveys their accumulated sense to the intellect. It is a thing which has been taken for granted like a point in Geometry. This "Sphota" makes every letter distinct and when the last letter of the word is heard, it lights up the sense or meaning of the whole word. This "Sphota" has nothing to do with sound in modern Science and it has been mentioned in order to explain how the sense is understood. Paithankar, carry on the repetition of "Soham". It will be sufficient for you.

Myself:- Maharaja, I have read about "Sat", "Chit" and "Ananda". But I have a great desire to hear an explanation of these three terms from the mouth of a Saint like you. Your explanations are so very simple and clear that I understand them very easily and they also get fixed in my mind. Besides, whatever has been written in the Shastras should, in my opinion, be got explained by Saints who really know the Shastras.

Maharaja:- Well done. It appears that you are well versed in the tricks of priests and pundits and have caught me in my own words. I have been telling all that I am an uneducated person and that I am just approaching the state of a Siddha through the stage of a Sadhaka. But as you are my friend and have faith in me, I have to tell you. Although I am not a Siddha but merely a servant of humanity, still, whatever I tell you will be beneficial to you owing to your faith.

"Sat" means that which is never destroyed, which always exists. It is nothing but Brahman.

"Chit" means that it is self-shining in all the three states, the waking, the dreaming and the sleeping states.

"Ananda" means bliss. A thing is dear to us not for the sake of that thing but for the sake of our soul, which is the real object of all our love and is therefore the only entity which is dear to us. Soul is, therefore, bliss i.e. Ananda. You are the Soul and the Soul is the Brahman. This principle should be thoroughly grasped by means of arguments, the authority of the Vedas and lastly through Self-experience.

Some Vedantins say that "I" (i.e., the Soul) is present always at the time when passions rise as well as when there are no passions. This principle, viz. "I", exists independently of the passions. Hence the "I" is really not fettered but is Mukta (free). Jains and Sankhyas, who do not admit the existence of God, respect this doctrine of Vedanta. But I say to both these kinds of philosophers that this doctrine of theirs, which is their own, may be advocated and spread by them. But the true Vedanta doctrine is that at the time of death only all ideas become entirely merged in the Soul. This sort of merging of ideas cannot be brought about by merely Self-control. If that is so, then how would the doctrine, that the "I" is present both at the time when passions rise as well as when they are absent, help a Sadhaka in catching hold of the Soul which can be grasped only when the flow of ideas has altogether stopped? On the contrary when the Sadhaka is in the waking and therefore in the discriminating state, he would surely be conscious of the existence of "this" and "that."

Myself:- Are there spirits and do they trouble human beings? Can they possess human beings?

Maharaja:- Bhutas (spirits) are the attendants of certain Gods. They get possession of a human body, Gods themselves do not. There are eighteen kinds of these Bhutas. They are known by the name of those gods whose

attendants they are. Their activities are generally confined to the night. They are terrible and eat flesh and drink blood. They get possession of a human being owing to some fault or sin of mind or intellect. It has been stated in the Mahabharata that Rakshasas (Bhutas) entered the bodies of even great men like Bhishma, because they looked upon the attempt to make Draupadi naked and having power did not intervene to prevent the attempt. They also enter a human being who is suffering from a disease. It is not true that they enter the body of a human being only at the time when he is suffering the results of his sin. They sometimes enter just before a sin is committed. The places and times when they enter a human being have been mentioned by Vriddha Vagbhata as under :-

- 1) When a person is alone ;
- 2) When he is in a deserted house ;
- 3) When he has an occasion to visit an intersection of roads ;
- 4) In the evening ;
- 5) When a person's body is unclean ;
- 6) On New-Moon and Full-Moon days, etc.

Now I shall tell you how the spirits enter the body of a human being. Deva and Asura Spirits enter by merely looking at the human being or through some passion generated by them in his mind. A Gandharva Spirit enters by touching the human body. A Yaksha Spirit generates a kind of fragrant smell and enters the body through the smell when that person inhales the fragrant smell. A Rakshasa Spirit sits on the shoulder of a human being, who then feels a sensation of heaviness in his body and then enters his body. A Pishacha Spirit embraces a human being, who then becomes unconscious and then enters his body. Different kinds of Spirits produce different kinds of characteristics in the human being possessed by them. A person possessed by a Deva Spirit acts virtuously and sometimes talks in Sanskrit, one possessed by a Gandharva Spirit develops a liking for music, desires the company of others' wives etc. Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has treated of this topic at some length I have only given you a slight idea of the subject.

Myself:- I know that concentration is absolutely necessary for spiritual progress. Will you kindly tell me how a Sadhaka should try to get the habit of concentration?

Maharaja:- Although the mind has always a tendency to leave the object of meditation and run away to other things the only remedy is to bring it back again and to fix it on the object of meditation. If we try to give a bent to the branch of a tree, in the beginning as soon as we remove our hand from it, it again becomes straight and assumes, its original position. But by continuous efforts of bending it and also by tying the bent parts by means of a rope etc., we succeed in giving it a permanent bent. Similarly, if a person while repeating his Japa finds that his mind has wandered away towards work in a court of law, the only remedy is to forcibly bring it back and to fix it again on the Japa. This must be practised for some days at least. Control over the mind is obtained not merely by such practice. Vairagya (detachment) is also necessary. The mind naturally runs towards those objects for which it has an

attraction. By Abhyasa (practice) the fickleness of the mind might be controlled. But its attachment cannot be done away with by mere practice. Hence a law was required to be passed in America for penalising persons practising certain kinds of mesmerism, which after all is really based upon a high degree of concentration. Pranayama may help towards concentration but undue importance should not be attached to it. Pranayama too would only be useful in removing the fickleness of mind. It cannot remove its attachment. The saying, "As long as the breath is moving or unsteady, the mind is also unsteady", is not an absolute truth. The vice versa is also true. Breath becomes unsteady when the mind becomes unsteady. In grief or anger breath becomes more quick. It is not, therefore, safe to expect that mind would be brought under control when the breath is controlled. Hence mind-control and breath-control must be carried on side by side. Hence it has been said by Shri Krishna in the Sixth Chapter of the Geeta : "Wherever the fickle and unsteady mind runs away it should be brought back there from and made to fix itself on the Soul." (Verse 26)

Maharaja:- What is the original place of residence of your family ?

Myself:- Paithan.

Maharaja:- In what part of Paithan is your ancestral house situated?

Myself:- Near the "Kucchar Ota."

Maharaja:- What do you mean by "Kucchar Ota" ?

Myself:- It is a raised spot where at the time of Shri Eknath Maharaja, scandal-mongers met together and indulged in the censure of that great saint and devised plans for bringing him into trouble. That man who went to Shri Eknath's house and jumped upon the back of his wife, was directed to go there and do so by persons who daily frequented this "Kucchar Ota".

Maharaja:- This then appears to be your tradition from old times.

Myself:- It is so. I have mentioned all these facts in order to make it clear that in coming to you I was not actuated by any blind faith. I came to you because I was convinced of the great unseen powers which you possess. Maharaja, I want to ask a question. It is written in the Shastras that Brahmins are superior to all other castes. Hence it is necessary that a person's Guru should be a Brahmin. What is your opinion about this? You are a Saint of self-realization. Hence you can say authoritatively about it, so as to convince ignorant persons like me.

Maharaja:- How can you say that an uneducated person like me can give any authoritative opinion about such a thing? It is no doubt true that I feel that the words which come out of my mouth are not really mine and that my Sadguru makes me his mouth-piece and speaks through my mouth. I do not agree with everything which is mentioned in the Shastras. Of course, I agree with some things mentioned there. It is because I can never forget my own real self. I try to learn things which are mentioned in the Shastras either from

conversations with well-read men or from the writings of our Saints but then I compare them with the self-experience granted to me by the grace of my Sadguru, who taught me to swim in the ocean of the everlasting and unlimited joy of self. Through the grace of my Sadguru, I tell things to my friends. If any of them have any difficulty in the path of Dhyana Yoga, I help them out of it and in doing so I have the mighty power of the Eternal in me. Whenever I refer to the Shastras, I do so in order that my hearers should put their faith in the principles inculcated, as being based on the Shastras and not merely on my words. I am not educated and it is but natural that people would not put any faith in merely what I say.

Now I shall try to answer your question. Why did Rameshwar Bhatji make Shri Tukaram his Guru although at that time there was Shri Ramadas at not a very great distance? Many Sanatani Brahmins, who were followers of the ritualistic religion, made Dadu Pinjari their Guru. To give you an instance of recent times, there was a Saint named Shri Sambhaji Maharaja who lived at Pirwadi near Satara. He was a Mahratha and still Kaka Puranik, a Brahmin of Sattwic temperament, made him his Guru. Many instances like this can be given. Once a person reaches the highest state of self-realisation, he really loses all caste and goes beyond all castes and creeds. In my opinion there is no objection to make him your Guru. I have to tell you that if you want to make real progress on the spiritual path, you should avoid like poison the following things : -

1. To talk slander regarding Saints who have attained the state of self-realisation.
2. To have devotion towards other deities (other than Sadguru i.e. your own Soul).
3. To see faults in your Guru.
4. To find faults with sacred books, such as the Vedas, the Koran or the Bible.
5. To consider that to repeat the name of God is useless and illusory.
6. To consider that to repeat the name of God is to flatter God.
7. To commit sins for the fulfilment of our desires on the ground that sins are washed away by the name of God.
8. To repeat the name of God with a desire to profit ourselves in worldly matters.
9. To press a person to repeat the name of God, knowing that he is deeply engrossed in worldly objects and has no feeling of devotion towards God.
10. To consider ourselves wise and to consider a person who repeats the name of God as mad or a fool, shutting our eyes to the great power of his devotion.

If a person observes these restrictions he is sure to experience the unlimited bliss of self and to cross the ocean of worldly existence through the grace of the Almighty. These words are not of my own poor self as an individual but they are the words of my Soul.

Myself:- Saints, persons well-versed in the Shastras and Pundits say that woman and wealth are the two great stumbling blocks on the path of: spiritual progress, that they lead to the ruin of a Sadhaka. I also agree with this view. But I should very much like to hear your views regarding them, so that I might understand the matter correctly. Your words will produce a lasting effect on my mind.

Maharaja:- No. They are not stumbling blocks. On the contrary they are helpful to a Sadhaka. It, however, depends upon what use you make of them and upon the way in which you look upon them. Every person has two kinds of minds - one is the considerate mind and the other the inconsiderate mind. If the considerate mind prevails, these things will be turned to a good use. If the inconsiderate mind gets the upper hand, these very things will certainly lead to ruin. The real meaning of the words of Saints cannot be understood unless a person attains the state of a Saint or unless the Saints themselves explain their meaning clearly. Although I do not pride myself upon understanding the real meaning, still I say what I say, as I am prompted by my inner Soul and I feel that must be what is really meant by Saints. If a Sadhaka looks upon all women except his own wife as mothers and practises meditation and gets the internal sight, I am sure he will get the real sight of knowledge and will see all women even with his physical eyes as if they were Goddesses. This attitude, however, can only be obtained by self experience gained by the firm practice of Dhyana-Yoga. The mind which gets this attitude is what is known as the considerate mind. Similarly if wealth is used for bringing about the well being of others, it is sure to be helpful to a Sadhaka. If wealth is used to relieve the miserable and the oppressed, it will surely give great delight to the Soul. Just see. If we make a good use of fire, we can have very good food prepared. If on the other hand we place it on the house of some other person, the house would be burnt down and ruin and misery would be the result. This will show that woman and wealth are not bad by themselves but everything depends upon the nature and the actions of a person in making use of them. If a Sadhaka finds that he would not be able to lead a life of celibacy, he should marry or I might even say that he should satisfy his desire by going to a prostitute. But he should never entertain any evil desire regarding the wives of others, who should be looked upon as mothers or sisters. If a Sadhaka has a keep but looks upon all other women as mothers or sisters, I think that he would in time become fit to be the recipient of Spiritual Knowledge.

Myself:- If through the force of some Karma in the previous life a Sadhaka commits a sinful act in this life, what would be the result in his case ?

Maharaja:- If a Sadhaka commits a sinful act once in a way, it might be explained away as the result of his Karma in previous life or lives designated as Prarabdha or Sanchita. But if such sinful acts are committed over and over again and he tries to explain them away by attributing them to his Prarabdha, he should certainly be considered as a base man. Just take a homely illustration. Suppose there is a live charcoal. You see it and although you are warned by your friend not to place your foot upon it, you out of a feeling of pride and arrogance do not heed the warning and place your foot upon it. You

are sure to suffer pain. This is something like Prarabdha. But would you ever again place your foot upon a fire even if you are asked to do so by a friend? No. Where has Prarabdha gone now? That means that when a person is full of repentance, he does not commit the sin again, nor does he quote Shastras and the doctrines of Prarabdha and Sanchita for justifying the commission of the sin.

A Sadhaka, therefore, should exercise his powers of reasoning and discrimination at the time of doing acts and should lead his life in accordance with the advice of his Guru. Gradually all his fetters would fall off as he progresses in the practice of meditation. I shall just tell you what Shri Gulabrao Maharaja says on this point.

“Look at our present day saints. Their Jivanmukti consists in not doing anything for their maintenance. They have therefore, to practise tricks for getting their livelihood. They practise more deceits and do more mean acts than persons who maintain themselves by labour ever dream of doing. These so-called saints have thrown off all social restrictions. If I, for instance, find some other saint is more respected as a Guru and has more disciples, I am sure to spread scandals about him among my disciples and his disciples also. Even if these saints do not know anything they can conceal their ignorance by assuming an attitude of being above discussions and arguments and of being merged in everlasting calmness. I, therefore, say that in my opinion, there is no class of scoundrels in this world worse than such saints who profit themselves by deceiving their followers. Whenever such saints are actually observed doing a sinful act, they attribute their sin to their Prarabdha and seek protection under its wings. This Prarabdha many a time saves them, because they do not suffer for their sins in this world. Of course, the punishment meted out to them by God hereafter would be beyond the knowledge of people in this world. All this argument of Prarabdha has been trotted out from the inexhaustible store of Vedanta. All actions which a follower of Charwaka would do can safely be done by these saints on the authority of the doctrine that saints are beyond sin and virtue, and that they are above all principles of morality which are meant for ordinary people. The only wonder is that these saints have learnt no real lessons from reading works on Vedanta like “Adwaita-Siddhi”. I do not mean to say that Vedanta is to be blamed for this. I should not be considered as belonging to that class of social reformers who have attacked Vedanta and have attributed many of the evils in our social system to its pernicious doctrines.

What I want to say is this. Without performing the duties of his Varna and Ashrama, without devotion and without acquiring the four Sadhanas, a person can study books on Vedanta like a school or college student and repeat its doctrines like a parrot. What is the use of all this? But perhaps I am wrong. If a person acquires all the four Sadhanas and then begins to think about Vedanta, a sentence or two from all these works would be quite sufficient to illuminate his mind and to enable him to attain Moksha. Then where would be the use of all these big works? Who would read them and save them from oblivion? Such persons who merely read all these books must therefore be credited with a desire to save these works from oblivion. They,

however, follow the doctrines of Vedanta as explained in these books only partially. Many of the present day Saints are similarly followers of Vedanta only partially.

Now if we look to the doctrine of Samata (looking upon every thing equally), even an ass may be credited with following this doctrine as it rolls in the dust, even a dog may be said to follow "Samata" as it has sexual connection with its mother or sister, even a fly may be given credit for following the doctrine because it eats food as well as dung and is equally delighted with both. These creatures also are partially followers of Vedanta. Most of the present day so-called saints have in them some external characteristics of Jivanmuktas and thus fall into the category of one or other of the above mentioned animals. A story is told in the Chhandogya Upanishad of a sage who asked a king for his daughter in marriage. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, there is a story of a sage who had two wives. These stories perhaps go to show that even sages and Vedantins are fettered by Prarabdha. But these sages clearly admitted that they were victims of certain passions. It is quite a different matter that notwithstanding this admission many people put their faith in these sages. But the present day saints conceal the fact that they have passions and remain unmarried. When, however, their passions are exposed in the case of the sisters or wives of their disciples, they explain them away and give them a garb of virtue by resorting to the argument of Prarabdha. They represent that that particular woman was their wife in their previous life and that it had been predetermined by Prarabdha that they should have sexual connection with her. Those who are real followers of Vedanta, however, are always sorry for any sinful action that occurs at their hands, even though it might have been brought about by the force of Prarabdha and they are always prepared to make a full admission of their faults. They always pray to the Almighty that they might be freed from the clutches of their passions without having been required by Prarabdha to do bad actions. They generally never find fault with others who might have succumbed to their passions. If, however, they blame others, they also blame themselves. Although it is very difficult to define in words as to who should be regarded a Saint, still it can be very easily understood that a person who comes forward as a Guru must at least not be a man whose actions are without any moral restrictions.

If saints are of different sorts and their external actions are also of different kinds, it is but natural that people also should treat different saints in different ways. If a saint's outward actions are morally bad, there is nothing to complain of, if people blame him or treat him with disrespect. The present day saints pose as if they are like Shukracharya as long as their passions are not exposed and when they are exposed they represent that they are, like Shri Krishna, beyond all moral restrictions and that they are quite detached from all sense of enjoyment. I have just told you what Shri Gulabrao Maharaja has said on this point, being inspired by him to do so.

Myself:- Maharaja, I want to ask a question regarding the light I see. Now I see a big circle of light in front of you. I saw it for the first time at Mr. Bhat's house. There I saw your form encircled in a halo of light. What is this

light and how is it seen? Can an ordinary person, who has not been graced by a Sadguru, see this light?

Maharaja :- Every person since his birth has a circle of light surrounding his body. It is known as the "aura". It is slightly bluish in colour and is oval in shape, broader towards the head than towards the feet. When a person is in good health and his intellectual powers are keen, this circle appears more distinct and more blue. Electricity or a magnet produces no effect upon it. Hence it cannot be supposed to have been made of any substance. The intensity of the light and its colours differ in different individuals according to their spiritual, moral and intellectual progress. Even in the same individual the intensity and colours change from time to time according to the state of his body, mind or intellect. The scientist Bagnal at first doubted the very existence of this light-circle or aura, but after many experiments he was convinced of its existence. He was convinced that these circles of light surrounding human bodies were not phantom images, nor could they be explained as the result of Fluorescence or Phosphorescence. He, however, thought that these circles of light were quite natural and that there was nothing mysterious or spiritual about them. He explained why they cannot be seen by the ordinary eye by saying that they are made up of ultra-violet rays. He has also mentioned the method of how to nullify the activities of certain nerves in the retina and to quicken the activities of certain other nerves in order to be able to see these circles of light. With all these experiments, however, he was later on convinced that his Guru Dr. Kilner possessed Clairvoyance as he could see these circles of light without having recourse to any method of nullifying and quickening the activities of any nerves. This Clairvoyance or Divya-Drishti is possessed by some great personages from their birth, while some get it by their own efforts, by penance and meditation. Although these circles of light are natural they are not made of inanimate electricity. Those great-souled personages who have an extraordinary quantity of this light can impart some of it to others who possess less and can cure them of bodily and mental ills.

It, therefore, appears that your Divya-Drishti has been opened and hence you have been able to see this circle of light. There is however, another kind of light which is actually seen by Sadhakas who practise Dhyana-Yoga. They see it in themselves by the internal sight. It is the light of the soul and it cannot be seen unless the power of internal sight has been granted to a Sadhaka by his Sadguru.

Myself:- There is a general idea among people that a mantra should not be repeated by a person when he is in an impure state of body. A woman, for instance, they say, should not do so when she is in her monthly course. I wish to know whether this idea is correct.

Maharaja:- There is no objection to take the name of God in any place and in any condition of the body. When a mantra is given by a Sadguru, the Sadhaka, after practice for some time, finds that the Japa sometimes proceeds automatically without any conscious effort on his part. He finds it beyond his power to stop it. Then how can he observe the restrictions

mentioned by you? Of course, it would be absurd to suppose that a person would deliberately repeat the mantra specially when he is in an impure state of body. No good devotee would do it. But I wish to make it clear that the name of God may be taken at any time and in any condition whatever.

CHAPTER V

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES OF VARIOUS DISCIPLES

Experiences of Mr. S. M. Gadkari, Clerk, G.P.O., Bombay.

My meeting with the Master, the conferring of His grace and my experiences in brief resulting from the grace.

Some years ago my position had become very difficult, owing to which my mind was in a despondent mood and I was at a loss to know what to do. As I was a devotee of Shree Datta, I went to Ganagapur, Narsoba Vadi and Oudumbar for Darshan of the Shrines there. In all these places some internal force made me think that I should devote the remaining portion of my life to spiritual matters, I then returned home and soon began to feel the necessity of meeting with some saint who would guide me on the spiritual path. After some days had passed in this manner I got a biography of Shri Upasani Maharaja to read. I also saw his photo. After reading the book I got a strong desire to go and take his Darshan. I, therefore, took leave and went to Sakori with my elder sister and had a Darshan of Shri Upasani Maharaja, who made affectionate inquiries regarding us. A very strong impression was produced upon my mind by all the circumstance there and my mind began to lose some of its sadness and to gain, a little in peace.

So I passed the whole of my leave there and then returned home. I used to go to Sakori off and on and for several years was following the routine of worship and some austere practices inculcated there. I had also freed my mind from all other causes of disturbance so that it might not get itself entangled anywhere. I had for worship an old photo of Shri Datta which was in our house since my father's time. My elder brother had for a long time worshipped it. The photo appeared to have a peculiar lustre of its own owing to its having been worshipped with devotion for a long time. Sometimes when I was sitting before this photo, I used to feel that the actions of my previous births must have been very bad, since with all these bodily troubles, I was not able to progress any further on the spiritual path; and then my mind became full of repentance. On every such occasion, however, a lustrous hand was stretched out from the photo making signals that I should wait. Owing to this I used to feel that the service that I was doing sincerely was being appreciated and recognized by God. I then used to feel a little bit encouraged and happy.

Several years passed in this manner in hopes that some day my desire would be fulfilled. Once I had a very strong desire to leave off service and everything else and to go to the Himalayas and never to return home. I then firmly determined to do so but I thought that before going away I should once take the Darshan of Shri Upasani Maharaja and then proceed further.

When the members of my family came to know about my plan, my sister and my two brothers said to me that they would accompany me to Sakori and then return home and that I should proceed to act in any manner as guided by God. They, therefore, started with me and having reached

Sakori, both my brothers communicated my plan to Shri Upasani Maharaja. He got very angry with me and said to me that if I was inclined to listen to his advice, I should cancel my plan and go back and join my service. Under these circumstances I had to respect his wishes and having stayed there for some days I returned and joined my service. I felt great sorrow that my plan was frustrated and I was at a loss to make out why all these obstructions intervened on my path. My elder brother was, however, telling me that my plan of leaving the world was of no earthly use. It would lead to waste of time and money and loss of health. Side by side he was also telling me about some saint whose, grace had been obtained by him, owing to which grace he was enjoying real joy and peace of mind.

I, however, had no faith in what he said. But when I began to look closely into the matter, I came to see that it was rather wonderful that a man like my brother, who had so many things in his worldly life to trouble him, should enjoy such peace of mind and I then felt certain that he must have obtained knowledge of the path to eternal peace through the grace of some Sadguru.

One day my brother urgently pressed me to accompany him to Dadar for taking the Darshan of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, who had come there from Nasik. Shri Gajanana Maharaja had put up with a friend of mine. When we went to the house of this friend, I found a stranger sitting there dressed like an ordinary man of the world. My brother placed his head on the feet of this stranger. I then thought that he must be the Maharaja and I also placed my head on his feet and then sat on one side. My brother then introduced me to him. I sat there for some time and then returned home.

Nearly three more years passed after that. Only my brother used to narrate to me occasionally his experiences on the spiritual path. Once one Mr. Chaphekar, another disciple of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, while on a visit to Bombay, came to our house at Dadar in order to see my brother. My brother then introduced us to each other. Mr. Chaphekar said to me, "I am saying this to you because I find that you have a very keen desire for the knowledge of God. A real jewel has been born in your caste. Why do you wander here and there and trouble yourself? We are purposely telling you this because we have been enjoying real joy. I have in my time taken the Darshan of many saints. Some are always absorbed in the bliss of self (soul). I have also seen some who merely deceive the world. That extraordinary personage by whose grace I am enjoying this joy is staying at Nasik. He occasionally comes to Parel. Without wasting any more time, go to him when he comes here and make entire submission to him and then you will come to know yourself."

I then thought that since that gentleman was saying so much, there must be some substratum of truth in it. Some days later when Shri Gajanana Maharaja came to Parel I went for his Darshan with my brother, who told Shri Gajanana Maharaja about my desire.

Maharaja then made inquiries with me and said that he would see about it if I would go to him on Thursday in the morning.

Accordingly on 27-8-1934, which was the 3rd day in the dark half of the month of Shravana (also it was Sankashti Chaturthi), at about 9 a. m. I went to Shri Gajanana Maharaja with my brother, having taken a garland of flowers, camphor, scented sticks, sweetmeats and some Dakshina with me. I then worshipped him and prayed humbly that I may be favoured with his grace. He asked me two or three questions and having made me sit in front of him, conferred his grace upon me and ordered me to repeat the syllable "OM". I asked him what particular path it was, to which he replied that it was the path of Saraswati. He then told me the following things, containing sound advice regarding the spiritual path.

"Observe every idea that rises in the mind merely as an observer but do not get yourself entangled in it. If you observe the conditions viz. to feel a keen disgust for worldly pleasures and to keep company with saints, you will cross the ocean of worldly existence and your life will attain its real end. For achieving this, Hatha Yoga is to a certain extent necessary. With the help of Hatha Yoga, any Mumukshu would by the grace of Sadguru succeed in going to the end of this Dhyana Yoga (meditation). When a Mumukshu attains this stage, he becomes mature and then only he can be said to have received the grace of Sadguru. The necessity of Hatha Yoga arises in the practice of Raja Yoga only for this purpose viz. to observe the three or four conditions mentioned above and to have them under one's firm control."

On the very first day, I got the Darshan of Om. The curtains in the ear were as it were opened by some one blowing through a wind-pipe and the Japa proceeded with complete ease and without restraint. The veins in the neck became free and the pain there stopped. The eyelids were drawn down and the sight naturally fixed itself on the tip of the nose and the Japa began there. Clouds of different colours appeared and peace came stealing over me. One day I saw Shri Ganapati and some flags; then one Veena (guitar) came in sight and after that the form of Shri Saraswati was seen with that Veena in her hand. Then the horizon with the Sun, the summit of the dome of a temple, then the dome and lastly the image of the goddess came in sight. Somebody's hand came out from the inside of the temple and that hand besmeared my forehead with sandal paste and again another hand appeared which Besmeared my forehead with Kunkuma (red powder which women use for marking their foreheads). I got the Darshan of my father and mother and felt very happy. On another occasion I saw that some one from a distance threw a garland of flowers round my neck and various scenes, umbrellas and elephants etc. passed before me. On another occasion I saw a big gate and a road beyond it. That road was so lustrous that it appeared like a current of molten silver and gold. Lights of different colours appeared and white wheels appeared surrounded by blue colour and lastly I got the Darshan of Shri Vishnu.

Some days later Maharaja told me to worship him mentally. I then saw (in a vision) Maharaja full of lustre. There was all around him a dazzling golden light. Then a big throne and some palanquins and some one sitting in each of the palanquins came in sight. In one palanquin only I saw the saint Rama Maruti of Kalyan. I also got the Darshan of Kamadhenu (the divine cow

which yields all desires). The sea, monkeys on the trees, Linga of Shiva and various other visions were seen.

On another occasion while I was sitting repeating the Japa, I suddenly felt some disturbance in the interior of my body. I felt shocks in the spinal chord and the way up to the Muladhar Chakra (situated at the anus) became clear by the back side, and the Japa began to be repeated there (i.e. at the Muladhar Chakra). Then the Japa began to be repeated at the navel region and a lotus appeared there. The form of Shri Vishnu appeared on that lotus, which form of Shri Vishnu then suddenly disappeared and in its place the lustrous form of my Sadguru (i.e. Shri Gajanana Maharaja) appeared. A lady garlanded me, while Maharaja was off and on making signs with his hand to me indicating that I should continue the Japa.

On another occasion I saw sprays of light coming up at the navel lotus, like those of a fountain. Then the Japa began to be repeated at the Muladhar Chakra and at the Brahmarandhra (i.e. the centre of the brain). Lights of various colours dazzling in appearance were seen and gave great delight to the mind.

Once I had the Darshan of the great Maharaja (i.e. Shri Narayan Saraswati). As soon as I shut my eyes I see a blue spark. I had also the Darshan of Shri Vithal and of Garuda. Lines of pearls are seen even when talking, walking or reading.

On 4th March 1938 after I returned home from my office in the evening, I, some time after, as usual sat for meditation and after completing it, was sitting reclining myself on my bedding. I felt that some power entered my body through the anus and my whole body began to rise up in convulsions. All nerves and veins in my feet appeared to be dead, the tongue appeared to be drawn inside, I could not make any sound or utter any words and thought I was nearing the end of my life. I was then alone in the room. Some time later my three nephews who stop with me came home and were frightened to see me in that condition. I told them that I did not think that I would live longer and asked them to send for my friend Mr. Santuram Karnik. Mr. Karnik came immediately and seeing my condition thought that I was a denizen of this world only for a few minutes, because I was almost like a dead man then. With all this I was internally feeling a sense of joy and as I was afterwards told by my friends, my face appeared to be smiling. I then expressed a desire that Mr. Patankar, pleader should be sent for. He listened to the details given by the messenger and came to me at about midnight accompanied by his nephew who is a doctor. The doctor examined me, gave me a sleeping dose and asked me to lie down quietly. Mr. Patankar said that there was no reason for fear. Mr. Karnik asked me whether a wire should be dispatched to Maharaja; but I replied that there was no necessity for it as Maharaja was just near me all the while. After the departure of Mr. Patankar, I saw some lustrous personage wearing a Pheta, riding a horse which was coming galloping towards me. When the personage came near me I could clearly make out that he was Maharaja himself. He got down from the horse and came close to me, when I took his Darshan. The internal disturbance in the body then began

slowly to lessen and soon after I fell asleep. Next morning when I got up, I found the portion of the body below the waist almost powerless and I could not walk. When I attempted to walk with the help of a stick, I felt giddy and became afraid that I would fall down. In the evening Maharaja again appeared and generated some heat in my body. I passed two or three days in the same condition but as there was no decided change for the better, I felt sure that there would be no change for the better unless I took the Darshan of Maharaja in the physical world.

I, however, waited for two days more for the reply of a letter written about me by Mr. Patankar to Maharaja and then I went to Nasik to the house of Maharaja. I immediately took his Darshan and mentioned all the details. He, thereupon, said that I should not have waited so long but should have immediately left for Nasik. I then stayed at Nasik near Maharaja for about a month and a half till the expiry of my leave. All complaints disappeared and my health regained its former state.

Since my stay at Nasik, the visions which used to appear formerly, entirely disappeared. Instead of OM a ceaseless sound of "Soham" began. I felt I was going into a deep valley and the sound was produced in the hollow there. There was dense darkness and I felt great fear. My whole body was trembling. The curtain of fear was suddenly taken away and there was the manifestation of brilliant light. The whole body was full of light and such a sense of joy was felt that I cannot describe it in words. At present whether I am sitting or rising up or lying down the Japa and light become united and immense joy is felt. I do nothing now. In every creature that I see I hear the Japa of Ajapa (Soham which is being unconsciously repeated by every living being with the taking in and letting out of breath) by my ears. Whenever I am sitting quietly doing nothing, I begin to hear the sound. of "Soham" in the external world and while hearing it suddenly I go into meditation and then that sound is heard internally and the whole body becomes internally illuminated with a powerful light and very great joy is felt. I also feel as if the whole world is full of light. Formerly I used to feel that I would get real solitude if I would go to the Himalayas. This idea has now entirely disappeared through the grace of Sadguru and through these experiences.

Mumukshus can get the experience of real joy through the grace of Sadguru, while living in this ordinary worldly life, and hence saints have said truly that there is no necessity for going to Gaya or for penance. A Mumukshu should get three or four things impressed upon his mind and he should have firm but discerning faith in his Sadguru. If he has a disgust of worldly pleasures, if he practises continuously and secures the grace of some saint, there is no doubt that he will surely attain his goal.

OM, Peace, Peace, Peace.

17th August 1938.

(Sd.) S. M. GADKARI

Experiences of Mr. Sadashiv Khanderao Garude,
of Parel, Bombay.

Myself and my aunt's son, the late Mr. Moreshwar Ramachandra Mathure, were stopping in Warden Pleader's Chawl at Lower Parel. Shri Gajanana Maharaja used to come at his own expense in a motor to see Mr. Mathure. I came in contact with him on one such occasion. Looking to his costly dress, no one could have any idea that he was a Maharaja or saint, but we came to know that he was so, later on. One day he asked my second wife for wine as prasad. I came to know about it in the evening when I returned from my office. Owing to this I began to lose my feeling of respect for him. Although I had money to spare for bringing wine, still, I could not get any one to go to the shop to bring it. I never visited such shops myself and now I think that I was purposely put to this hard test. My wife secured a little brandy from a neighbour on the pretext that my young daughter was suffering from stomach-ache and having poured it in a bottle, kept the bottle before the Gods. I thought that a drunkard, although he may be a Maharaja, was hardly the person who would ever be able to lead me to the right path. I did not get any sleep that night. I did not also go in the next morning as usual for his Darshan to Mr. Mathure's room. But at about 9.30 a.m. he came inquiring about me supporting himself on a stick and repeating a line of a Hindi song to the effect, "Be always on the watch, keeping always an eye on the workings of your mind." I was then about to sit for my meals, having completed my worship of the Gods. He began to eat the Papad (a pungent and salty kind of cake baked on fire) in my dish. My wife told me to give the wine 'Prasad' to him but Maharaja offered it to me.

I was at a loss what to do as it was almost next to impossible that I should take that kind of Prasad at the time of going to office. But he said that I must take it and having poured the wine from the bottle into a small pot in our presence, placed his hand over it and asked my wife and myself to take it. To our wonder we found that it had turned into fresh milk. We both of us then took it and since then I left off making any criticisms about him regarding drinking.

On one Mahashivratri day my elder brother Mr. Ramachandra Khanderao Garude, my aunt's son Mr. Moreshwar Mathure, myself and some other persons from our chawl went for the Darshan of Maharaja to the house of Mr. Narayanrao Samarth, who was stopping near Parel Government Gate. The lamps had been just lighted there as it was nightfall. Maharaja told me to look at the lamp which was near me. As I did so I saw that every person and every thing there was a shining big orb like the sun. This vision continued for about half an hour when Maharaja placed his hand upon my head and then the scene stopped and I began to see things in their ordinary form. Some time later we all returned home.

Maharaja had once been to my brother's place at Worli. At that time he jokingly asked my mother to take him on her hip. As Maharaja is every thin

and light my mother could easily lift him up but he again asked her to do so and she found it impossible as he had then grown very heavy. He performs such miracles whenever he likes to do so. But he becomes angry if any one asks him to perform them.

We had been to Dhulia for the marriage-ceremony of my wife's sister. There were a few persons sitting for dinner at that time. Through oversight scented sticks had not been lighted. Maharaja who was sitting there, smoked a cigarette and the fragrant smell of scented sticks was felt by every one. He often performs this miracle, whenever he likes to do so.

Once I was travelling in a motor with my friend the late Mr. Balkrishna Ganesh Dixit and Maharaja. Maharaja had then drunk a very large quantity of wine. We said to him, "You have taken too much to-day, how will you digest it?" He immediately turned the whole quantity of brandy, which he had with him, into milk. We were absolutely silenced then. He has performed miracles like this, not once or twice, but innumerable times.

One can never get tired of Maharaja's company. Whatever may be the state of mind of a person, if he comes near Maharaja, he always enjoys a feeling of quiet and happiness and becomes oblivious of the passing of time. My friend Mr. Balkrishna Ganesh Dixit and myself took him several times in a carriage to some saints when he was drunk but these saints had not the least suspicion regarding his having taken any drink and paid him due respect.

Whenever Maharaja stopped with me or with Mr. Dixit, he never took any thing except tea and on rare occasions "Chivda". We thus know that he never takes any meals.

(Sd.) SADASHIV KHANDERAO GARUDE

III

Extract from a letter written from Dadar, Bombay,
by Mr. Vinayak Kashinath Khale.

KOTHARE'S CHAWL,
BHAWANI SHANKAR KOAD,
Dadar, 2nd May 1935.

A thousand bows to the feet of Shri Sadguru. I am a sinning soul but through the merit of my forefathers, I received the grace of Maharaja, regarding which I cannot give any description in words.

I am continuing the Japa according to your orders. I do it daily for at least ten to twelve hours. After you left for Nasik, on the third day early in the morning while I was repeating the Japa, I heard a sound proceeding from inside the head and immediately saw a flame of white colour, which later turned into a ball of red colour. Concentration of the mind was not then

disturbed and I felt a sort of joy. Some days later blue and red squares were seen and they are seen occasionally even now.

One day while I was sitting on my bed, repeating the Japa, the form of Shri Gajanana appeared before me, which seemed to have come out of a pillar. My eyes had at that time been shut. I generally shut my eyes during Japa and these visions are seen internally. It is not that I always shut my eyes during the Japa; but as the Japa proceeds, the mind becomes more and more concentrated. At present I only see a face full of lustre. The features are not distinct but the eyes are very lustrous. The light resembles electric light. Sometimes I cannot bear the light and then I open my eyes. While repeating the Japa the head begins to feel heavy and sometimes I sneeze.

I have given a description to the best of my little ability, of the experiences which I have got through the grace of Sadguru. I am an ignorant man and cannot understand the meaning of these experiences and hence cannot write about them.

I am, however, slowly becoming conscious that the Sadguru is omniscient and is inside my heart. That my mind, which has been extremely troubled by worldly troubles, is calm, is nothing but the result of Sadguru's grace.

Waiting for the favour of a reply.

I remain,
Maharaja's humble servant,
(Sd.) VINAYAK KASHINATH KHALE

IV

Spiritual experiences of Mr. V. T. Patankar, B.A., LL.B
Pleader, Dadar, Bombay, some written down by him
separately and some contained in various letters
written by him to Shri Gajanana Maharaja.

Date 1-11-31

Upto the age of 40 or 41 years, my life was spent randomly and I had begun to doubt the very existence of God. My wife became seriously ill and this illness continued for more than two years. During this time my mind was full of anxiety. Novels and other light literature could not amuse me and I began to read religious books. I read the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa which gave a turn to my mind and I began to have a liking for spiritual topics. I then read the Bhagwad-Gita, which had a great effect upon my mind. At this time the illness of my wife increased. My friends advised me to perform some religious ceremonies which would avert evil planetary influences. I was firmly convinced that without God's grace my wife would never recover.

At the suggestion of one of my friends I commenced reading the Eleventh Chapter of the Gita every day and to meditate upon Shri Krishna by placing His picture before me. I did this for about a month. Although there was no progress in meditation, still my mind gained a little in calmness and the feeling of anxiety slowly began to lessen. I could mentally see the form of Shri Krishna, although indistinctly. This was, as it were, a preparation for receiving the grace of Sadguru. In September 1931 I went with Mr. Gadkari, Pleader, for the Darshan of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I mentioned to him what I had been doing. He took compassion on me and told me to sit in meditation. I commenced doing so. In a day or two Shri Krishna's form appeared distinctly and I felt as if Maharaja was sitting in front of me.

Maharaja then told me to worship Shri Krishna mentally. The result was that Shri Krishna's form appeared before me as soon as I started meditation. Shri Krishna accepted my worship fully and gave me holy water of His feet. I began to repeat the Mantra "Om Radha Krishna", sitting in front of that Shri Krishna. Then I worshipped Him mentally along with my wife (i.e. saw my wife mentally). She appeared to be very beautiful and strong.

Later on the Japa which I was repeating in my mind began to be heard by the ears. This also happened in the case of the eleventh chapter of the Gita. At the bidding of Maharaja I commenced going to Nasik and other places for a bath in my astral body. I thus used to go to the place where my wife was then staying. This progress was very quick and I thought that I should every day go to Maharaja and fall prostrate at his feet.

In my mental worship I used to make Shri Krishna sleep on a bedstead and cover Him over with a shawl. One day I removed the shawl and found Maharaja sleeping instead of Shri Krishna, then myself instead of Maharaja and then my wife instead of myself. I then realised the truth of the words, "All this is really Brahman." Once instead of Shri Krishna or Maharaja, I saw my own form and found myself worshipping it. I then realised the truth of the words I am "Brahman."

During these days I used often to feel the smell of scented sticks, attar, ketaka etc., and was convinced that these smells were not external or physical, but internal, due to the grace of Sadguru. I sometimes saw Shri Vishnu, Ramdas, Shivaji and Tukaram.

Two days previous to Ganesh Chaturthi, at about 8 p.m. when I was sitting in meditation, I got profuse perspiration. I thought that it was a sickness and took a quinine pill. When I mentioned this to Maharaja, he said that it showed great progress and that I should not be afraid about it and should not take any medicine.

Two or three days later I felt that a flame starting from the chest was going up to the throat. One day Maharaja had come to Mr. Gadkari's place. At about midnight he told me to meditate upon Om. I could distinctly see Om full of dazzling light. I had never seen this before nor was I able to see it again although I tried several times.

Then Shri Shankar appeared in place of Shri Krishna. I was a little bit afraid of Him. Shri Shankar disappeared and a Rakshasa with a drawn sword in his hand appeared in His place. I hesitated for about a minute and then challenged him to cut off my neck. He cut off my head which fell away at a distance of 10 or 12 cubits and a square pit of fire appeared between the Rakshasa and myself. My head fell into this pit and then I threw the remaining part of my body also into the pit.

When I began later on to think about this vision I came to the conclusion that my Avidya (ignorance) had now been destroyed and that I had now become worthy of being the recipient of Vidya (knowledge).

On the day of the eclipse of the moon, while I was meditating, I saw Shri Shankar and my wife in front of Him. Yama was there on his buffalo and he had thrown his snares on the neck of my wife. Shri Shankar ordered Yama to turn back, upon which he removed his snares and went away. Two or three days after this vision I received a letter from Karhad, where my wife was then staying, that her condition was very critical on the day of the eclipse. Since that time my fear regarding Shri Shankar disappeared and I began to sit on His lap and saw my wife also doing the same.

I sometimes saw Shri Ganapati moving His trunk on the body of my wife. I then impressed upon my mind the fact that I need not feel any anxiety as my whole responsibility had been taken up by Shri Krishna.

On the day of Ganesh Chaturthi, Maharaja told me to direct my attention towards the anus. I saw Ganapati there having a very big trunk which He was moving up and down. Maharaja told me not to look downwards again but to fix my attention on the Sahasradala (the centre of the brain). Maharaja then went to Nasik.

In the beginning of Ashwin, when I sat for meditation, I began to feel convulsions and my whole body began to tremble and I could not fix my attention. My whole body began to shake so violently that I felt as if I was possessed. I began to suspect then that my Kundalini was being awakened. I wrote a detailed letter to Maharaja, who wrote in reply that I should not be afraid but carry on the practice.

Some days later Maharaja came to Bombay and made me sit before him in meditation. I then saw the Kundalini, a black serpent with a hood, slowly ascending through the spinal cord up to the neck, disappearing there, and again appearing. It then came to the head and then to the Dwidala (situated between the eye brows), sat there for some time having coiled itself and with the hood raised and then disappeared. At the order of Maharaja, I again saw it once as if made of silver and then as if made of gold. It came up from the anus up to the chest. He then ordered me to look into the eyes and there I saw a beautiful form of Shri Krishna. Maharaja then told me to carry on practice even in his absence and that he would always be near me, although physically he might be at a distance.

Again I was told to direct my attention to the Muladhara. When I did so I saw an exceptionally beautiful lady there who pointed out to me a dazzling flame at some distance.

Once while I was sleeping I felt as if some one else was sleeping near me with his cheek touching my cheek, found that it was a woman who, however, immediately moved away. She was Lila as shown in a picture in the Yoga Vasishtha. Next day when I went to Maharaja, he of his own accord made a reference to this appearance and said that I had been in danger, of being infatuated with a woman but I had been saved from it.

One fact is specially to be noted. Since I began this practice my passion (love) has almost disappeared. In the physical world even if I look at a beautiful woman or in meditation even if naked women appear before me, no sinful thought ever arises regarding them. On the contrary a feeling as that of a child towards its mother is created.

One day Maharaja ordered me to direct my attention to the Muladhara. I did so and saw a pit of fire there. Flames were coming out of it and reaching up to my chest. A beautiful lady appeared in the flames. Maharaja then told me to see the Vishwarupa (all pervading form) of Kundalini. Again I could see the pit of fire and the beautiful lady in the midst of the flames. That lady took the form of a serpent which had innumerable mouths, the innumerable tongues in which were moving. My whole body was then shaking but I was fully conscious, there was a smile on my face and there was not the least trace of fear in my mind.

Once while I was sitting in meditation I saw the form of Gautam Buddha and I felt as if I myself was that Buddha sitting in contemplation. My whole body began to swell, the chest began to swell so much that I thought that it would burst. I then remembered Maharaja and then the vision stopped.

Then a spark began to appear which later on turned into a flame, which threw out innumerable sparks of light resembling fireworks.

Once Maharaja told me to meditate upon the Rasa-Krida (dancing sport) of Shri Krishna. As soon as I did so I saw thousands of Gopis sporting with Shri Krishna. Every Gopi had one Shri Krishna with her. Then I saw all these Gopis naked and through the female organ of every Gopi one small child, of blue colour, very beautiful, about 2 or 3 years old, appeared to come out. The child was Shri Krishna. That child's form then appeared in the hearts of the Gopis. The Kundalini of every Gopi then was awakened and it went up to the Sahasradala (centre of the brain) from which a flame of blue colour appeared to ascend. Then all these thousands of flames merged into one and Shri Krishna's form appeared made out of this big flame.

Next day again I was told by Maharaja to see the Rasa-Krida once more. I then saw Shri Krishna turning in circles with thousands of Gopis. Then I saw every Gopi playing separately with one Shri Krishna. Then I saw that every Shri Krishna was the reflection of that Gopi and the forms of Shri

Krishna disappeared. Then I saw myself and Maharaja turning in circles and after that I saw myself turning in circles with another form of myself. Thus I realised the unity of all and understood that the Gopis were really sporting with themselves.

Once when I sat for meditation, I saw light filling my heart. My whole body then became merged in that light and I saw light pervading every where and the whole world appeared to be nothing else than an ocean of light. All forms vanished and there appeared only one shining entity everywhere.

Once I was ordered by Maharaja to contemplate on the flame of the soul. I then saw a flame in my heart, which then appeared on all sides. It was of blue colour. I was ordered to see it again in the heart. Then I saw the flame of the form of an almond. It had three colours, blue in the centre, red in the middle and yellow on the outer side.

Once I got a desire to hear the sound of the flute of Shri Krishna. I could always see Shri Krishna with the flute in his hand as if playing upon it but upto this time I had not heard the sound. I, therefore, pressed my request importunately like a child before Shri Krishna and began to cry. Shri Krishna then placed His hand on my head and said that I would be able to hear the sound. I mentioned this to Maharaja, who then told me to meditate and I could see Shri Krishna playing upon the flute and heard the divine sound.

1st November 1931

(Sd.) VISHWANATH

Extracts from a letter dated 27-11-31 written from Dadar:-

I went to Karhad after taking your leave. My wife then every day was getting fever upto 103°. In the morning her temperature was 98°. As directed by you I made her sit in meditation in the morning placing my hand upon her head. I side by side meditated myself. I felt as if you were sitting in my place. Although as long as I was there, the fever continued as before, still my wife began to feel certain that she would ultimately recover.

While at Karhad I got Shri Vishnu's Darshan in meditation and proffered my prayer to Him. I said, "Do as you like. Take her away or keep her here if you wish my family life to continue. Fix up my mind in the self. Grant me the gift of knowledge and devotion and detachment." Upon this Shri Vishnu first said, "Do not be afraid" and then "Let it be so."

In meditation I often see you and Shri Krishna placing your hand on the head of my wife while the Sudarshana Chakra (the disc of Shri Krishna) is all the time turning round on all sides.

Once in meditation I saw myself and my wife going to the milky ocean, where Shri Vishnu was lying on the Shesha and Shri Lakshmi was pressing His feet. Shri Lakshmi was staring at me significantly as if asking me what I wanted. We both of us bowed to Shri Vishnu and I asked for knowledge,

devotion and detachment Shri Vishnu then placed His hand on the heads of both of us.

One day I was lying down on my bed before sleep and had begun to repeat the Japa when seven or eight young girls came near me. The last one was extraordinarily beautiful and approached me making fascinating gestures. I got suddenly angry and told her to go away and threatened that I would kick her if she would again come near me. Then the whole scene disappeared and I felt asleep.

The Kundalini appears to have come under my control.

Extracts from a letter dated 15th March 1932 written from Dadar:-

I have been continuing the practice of meditation as directed by you. The mother (i.e. Kundalini) came swiftly up to the Anahata Chakra (the plexus situated at the heart) and assumed the form of a beautiful lady at the place of the hood and began to drink the nectar. There is a protuberance like the nipple of a woman's breast above the throat which is called uvula, from which nectar flowed in two or three lines and fell exactly into the mouth of the Kundalini. Once I got an idea of drinking the nectar myself and having turned my tongue inwards touched the palate with its tip but did not succeed in getting even a drop of that nectar. I then left off that effort especially as it was against your orders.

On the Shiwaratri day the Kundalini came up swiftly to the tenth door (i.e. the centre of the eye-brows) and through it passed on to the Sahasradala and sat there coiling itself up. I felt a sense of deep joy and got a desire of getting the Darshana of Shiva and Parvati. I, therefore, directed my attention to the Anahata Chakra (i.e. at the heart) took the Darshana of Shiva and Parvati there and took a bath in the Ganges issuing out of the matted hair of Shiva.

Violet colour is very often seen. Once I saw a bee in my heart and found the violet colour coming out of its body.

Occasionally I see Shree Datta, sometimes in the Dwidala (near the eye-brows) and sometimes in the front. He places his hand on my head. You then appear and do the same.

Yesterday when I sat for meditation, my body began to move from side to side violently. I however, felt no trouble; on the contrary experienced a feeling of great joy.

Extracts from a letter dated 8th May 1932 written from Dadar :-

You taught me to take the Kundalini upwards by the front side. I now describe the experiences got while doing so.

I sit in the Padmasana posture. The Vayu is drawn upwards through the male organ and the Kundalini then comes up to the Swadhishtana. Then a deep red lotus of six petals is seen and Brahmadeva sitting upon it, who places His hand on my head and gives a red lotus to me. With this lotus in my hand I then go to the Muladhara Chakra. There a lotus of four petals of different colours is seen and the letters "Yam", "Ram", "Lam" and "Vam" appear on the four petals. A beautiful form of Ganapati is seen there, who catches me in His trunk and having placed me on His lap puts "Modak" (sweet ball) into my mouth, which I eat with great delight. He also orders two ladies (probably Riddhi and Siddhi) to salute me. They do so and then I go up to the "Manipura Chakra", where I see a lotus of ten petals, I get the Darshana of Shri Vishnu there and of Lakshmi who is pressing His feet. He blesses me and having given His Sudarshana Chakra in my hand tells me to go upwards to the Anahata Chakra. I do so and see a lotus of twelve petals and get the Darshana of Shiva and Parvati. I then offer the red lotus given to me by Brahmadeva (which in my opinion represents the qualities of "Rajas" and "Tamas") to Shri Shiva and pray to Him to destroy these qualities in me. Then Shiva places me on His lap, besmeares my forehead and sometimes my whole body with ashes and Parvati gives to me a white lotus, taking which I straight go through the Sushumna to the door of the "Bhramara Gupha". At present I do not go to the "Vishuddha" and "Ajna" Chakras which are on the way. I there meet "Kundalini" in the form of a beautiful naked woman and coming out of the flames from a pit of fire. She (the Kundalini) displays before me extremely beautiful women, thrones, bars of gold and slabs of silver and says that she would give me the kingdom of the three worlds, but that I should not go into the Bhramara Gupha.

I, however, refuse to be tempted, tell her that I want nothing but the knowledge of self and having saluted her enter the "Bhramara Gupha". Then after a few moments I get the Darshana of Shri Sita and then of Shri Rama and Maruti. Shri Rama hands over His bow and arrows to me and suggests that I should aim at the self. Shri Sita gives me a white rose flower having removed it from Her hair. Then I get the Darshana of Saraswati sitting on the peacock. She places her hand on my head and gives me the book which is in Her hand. Then at my request she plays on the guitar producing from it the sounds of "Soham" and "Om Tat Sat", which, however, are heard very indistinctly by me.

Then I see "Kamadhenu" (the Celestial Cow which yields all desires) of a darkish colour. I milk her and drink the milk out of a gourd. Then the cow makes a sound and begins to lick my whole body.

I then through great affection embrace the cow and feel a sense of deep joy. Then I see Shri Datta having three faces and six hands. I bow to Him and He sometimes makes the sound of "Soham" and sometimes of "Om Tat Sat" in my ears. Then I sit for meditation there i.e. in the "Bhramara Gupha" repeating the Japa of "Soham" or of "Om Tat Sat".

Extracts from a letter dated 4-7-1932 from Dadar :-

Now-a-days the Kundalini appears in the form of a beautiful lady and having placed her hand on my head promises to help me in getting the knowledge of self. I had a suspicion that she might be deceiving me but she dispelled it by telling me that I had gone beyond the lure of any temptation which she might put forth and hence she had abandoned her old form of Avidya and taken up the form of pure Sattwa quality for helping me on the path of self-knowledge.

Shri Saraswati promises to look after my worldly affairs. Shri Maruti throws me into the ocean and you lift me up and take me to the other side. There I see Shri Sita in a state of separation from Shri Rama and when I hand over to her the white rose which she had given to me before, Ravana with ten faces appears, with whom I fight and having cut off all his heads with the arrows throw them into a pit of fire and they are reduced to ashes. I then myself jump into the pit and my astral body comes out of the flames, wanders in the sky and then enters a cave where I see your Sadguru, who blesses me and says that everything would be all right.

Then I return with a mountain to Lanka, put something into the mouth of Lakshmana lying down motionless there. Lakshmana then gets up. Bibhishana is then crowned and we all go with Shri Rama to Ayodhya where Shri Rama is crowned by Shri Vasishtha. Shri Vasishtha then blesses me. The whole scene disappears. I become void of thought and there is a feeling of very great joy but this state does not last for a long time.

A few days ago Shri Datta appeared and gave a strong blow of His trident on my head. There was a wound and blood spouted out of it. He sprinkled the wound with the water from His gourd I did not get afraid. He then placed his hand on my head and told the mantra "Om Tat Sat" in my ear and kissed me affectionately.

Extracts from a letter dated 4-11-32 written from Dadar :-

Now-a-days it often happens that while I am performing mental worship, suddenly a violet-coloured light appears in the "Bhramara Gumpha". The mind is at once attracted and soon becomes absorbed and for a short time the state of mindlessness is experienced. I desire that this state should last for a long time.

When I sit in meditation, Brahmadeva appears and having blessed me says that He has made me master of Swadhishtana. I tell Him that my desires have not all disappeared and that there does not seem to be any power in His blessing. He then gives me a red lotus and asks me to offer it to Shiva and not to be impatient.

When I go to the Muladhar I get the Darshana of Shri Ganapati who embraces and kisses me. One day, however, He appeared to be very angry. He placed one of his feet on my foot and having caught my other foot with His

trunk showed as if He was going to tear me into two pieces. I, however, was feeling quite calm and told Him that He and I are one, the soul can never be killed and if He would destroy my body it would be so much the better. He then at once became gentle, embraced me and kissed me.

Once when in embrace Shri Ganapati and myself had become one, I saw Shri Ganapati's Kundalini of the colour of molten gold with diamonds in the eyes. I had never seen my own Kundalini of this dazzling appearance.

I was once ordered by Shri Vishnu in the Manipura Chakra to go to Lakshmi. Accordingly I approached Her. She kissed me and asked me what I desired. I asked for knowledge, devotion and detachment and said that just as she never left the feet of Shri Vishnu, I too should never leave them. She blessed me and said that she would look to all my worldly affairs. Now every day I go to Lakshmi and she takes me on Her lap and sucks me at Her breasts.

Once Shri Vishnu also assumed the terrible Vishwarupa (all pervading form) but I was not afraid. I had folded my hands and was quietly looking on. Then He also kissed me, gave His Sudarshan in my hand and blessed me saying that I would get knowledge, devotion and detachment.

Letter from Dadar, Bombay, dated 24-2-1934 :-

Salutations to the feet of Shri Gajanana Maharaj.

To-day I am writing regarding my spiritual progress after I sent the last letter. A few days before I sent my last letter, one day while I was lying down at ease on a cot in my house and repeating the Japa, I suddenly felt that the whole of my body from my feet was being turned into stone-like rigidity and then I lost all consciousness. I cannot say how long this state lasted. But when I regained my former state I felt that the rigidity from my head down to my feet had disappeared. After that when you went to Nasik and returned, I made a persistent request that my Kundalini should reach the thousand petalled lotus (Sahasradala i.e. Centre of the Brain) and you graciously permitted the same. Still for two days my "Kundalini" having partly entered the minute aperture of "Sahasradala" appeared to me to be hanging space. When however I brought this fact to your notice, you said "There is no obstruction, now. Go on," after which this condition of the Kundalini hanging in the middle came to an end and the Kundalini entered inside and there disappeared.

Inside there suddenly appeared a big sea of blue colour with great waves rolling about. I saw a boat named Soham (I am He) on this sea and saw you, my Master, guiding the boat, having taken the helm in your hands. Just close to this spot, I saw the Great Master (Narayan Saraswati) seated for performing Sandhya adoration'. I approached him and bowed to him, when he placed his right palm on my head and blessed me saying "You will get everything (that you desire)". After that on that boat I got the Darshan of Shree Ramkrishna Paramahansa, His wife, Shri Jnaneshwar Maharaj, Tukaram Maharaj, Janardan Swami, Ramdas and Shivaji Maharaj in

succession. And all these saints bestowed upon me their blessings. Shivaji Maharaj only placed the crown upon my head and his sword in my hand. Having taken these things with me, I went back for your Darshan where you were holding the helm. When I approached you, you placed your right palm on my head and ordered me to plunge from this boat into the wide sea. Being actuated by a desire to go into the boat and see who was working the engine on the boat, I purposely went below and to my wonder saw Lord Krishna himself working the engine.

In obedience to your order, I went to one end of the boat, got up on the railing and at once jumped into the sea. As soon as I fell into the sea I went down and down, till I reached the bottom. Then I saw the Divine Vishnu with four arms, who embraced me. He placed his crown upon my head and his "Sudarshan Chakra" (Disc) in my hand and bestowed upon me His blessings. And then I came up to the shore where the Goddess Laxmi with four hands was standing holding Pancharati (lighted ghee-lamp having five burning flames) in her hands, which she turned round me and then embraced me. She then handed over the Pancharati to another lady standing near her. She then placed her crown on my head. The other lady also turned the Pancharati round me and I removed the crown from my head and placed it on her head. Then the second lady made various amorous gestures with a view to seduce me but she later on was convinced that I was not a man to be thus reduced. I then held her feet and asked her, "Mother, why do you molest me and test me?" Then that lady gave me a gold-bordered yellow-coloured garment to wear. I put it on and worshipped you mentally with all proper rites. Then I began meditation having taken up the appropriate posture. At that time, I saw two big brass lamps burning on my both sides and two women namely Riddhi and Siddhi standing on my two sides and waiting upon me with a chowri and a fan. I also saw that while I was sitting in that posture people of my acquaintance were coming and bowing to me. This state of my experiences continued for several days and every day the above mentioned visions with slight changes continued to appear and every day I used to ask you this question "What next?" In this state several months passed and after that only a few days ago, you ordered me to fix my eye-sight on the tip of my nose and to look to the central point between the two eye-brows and to tell you what I saw there. Novice as I was, I committed mistakes but very soon through your grace I understood your meaning and began to look to the centre of the eye-brows having fixed my mind on the tip of the nose. There I saw a lustrous eye and in that eye I saw you lying down on the Shesha while your feet were being pressed by Shakti. A few days afterwards, I saw you, the Divine Vishnu and myself lying down on the same Shesha. I see this vision now every day. By your order when I began to look upwards by means of this eye situated at the centre of the eye-brows, I felt that my brain was absolutely benumbed, and an extremely dazzling light appeared in the midst of the brain. Now every day when I look upwards by means of this eye, the Japa stops of itself and the mind becomes void of thought. But this state does not last for a long time. I humbly pray to your feet that this state should last at least for half an hour.

Sometimes a mountain like a volcano appears in the centre of the brain and from its top-most summit a streak of light comes out similar to that usually

seen coming out of fireworks. And in that light various delightful colours and tree-like shapes appear. I see these charming visions and the mind is full of joy; but concentration of the mind does not last for a long interval and the mind begins to wander. I then abuse my mind and make efforts to concentrate it by force, but my fickle mind does not obey me. I then remember you and understand the real use of your near presence and a desire is born in me that you should be always near me.

At Your Feet
(Sd.) VISHWANATH

Letter dated 5th October 1934 from Dadar, Bombay :-

Salutations to the feet of Shri Sadguru Gajanana Maharaja.

According to your order I am sending this instalment of my inner history. I have now again begun to go to the Ganges for a bath which I had stopped for some time. There I see Shri Krishna and my relations with him are more familiar than before. I forget that he is a God and feel as if he is my dearest friend. He also tells me to begin my work and not to waste time. Then my practice begins. I see an eye at the centre between the eye-brows and in that eye I get Darshan of Narayan lying on the Shesha, on which I also see you and lastly myself lying down. I also see some people of my acquaintance coming there and waiting upon me. I am absolutely a worthless person and I am still a Sadhaka and I do not understand why I should see such a spectacle. I think that this might be my test and an attempt is being made to see whether my egotism becomes aroused. Then through that eye a light comes out just like the light of an electric lamp and in that light I get the Darshan of the Great Maharaja (Narayan Saraswati) and I perform his worship with all proper rites. At first he used to upbraid me for troubling him and for causing interruption to his Samadhi but I did not obey him and did not leave off worshipping him. Now he quietly accepts my worship and at the end places his right palm on my head and gives me his blessings. I then worship you and after that worship myself. After that I see a big sea of blue colour full of waves. I see myself sitting in a posture on the waves and I see the disc of the full moon shining above. Then I see in my front the Shalunka with the Ling in it. I pour water on the Ling and worship it. The Ling feels soft and smooth to the hand and a light appears to issue out of the Ling. After my worship is over, the Shalunka, the Ling and myself turn round three times after which Shri Shankar comes out of the Ling. Parvati is sitting on one lap and Ganapati on the other. The oblation of milk which has been offered by me while worshipping is taken up by Shri Shankar, who having partaken a portion of it, asks Parvati and Ganapati also to partake of it, and then places the remainder in my hand which I drink with great delight. After that he places his hand on my head and blesses me saying "Child all will be well with you." Then Parvati says, "Child, you will be happy" and places her hand on my head. Then Ganapati also, saying, "Your path will be happy," places his hand on my head. Again Shri Shankar places his hand on my head and I begin to sink into the sea. While sitting in the posture, I go down and down and after having gone to a very great depth, suddenly a light appears and in that light I get the Darshan

of Narayan lying on the Shesha. Shri Vishnu places his hand on my head and gives his Sudarshan Chakra in my hand. I place that Chakra on my finger. Streaks of light come out of the Chakra and it begins to whirl round my finger. Then I get the Darshan of Maruti who with the mace in his hand strikes the centre of my skull and I see a flag of orange colour of the height of about a foot and a half fixed in the centre of the skull. Then I see Maruti himself standing with his feet on my head and then He begins to fly up. I too follow him. Having flown and traversed a vast distance, he goes towards a very big Bunyan tree, where I see an old Yogi of very great height. He is so tall that my head touches his knee. Near him I see a Yogini very tall and majestic, wearing an orange-coloured robe. I bow to the Yogi and he blesses me and asks me to accompany him, which I do. Through him, I get the Darshan of Shri Ramchandra. I step forward and bow to his feet. I see Shri Ramchandra with Seeta Mai on the lap, sitting on the throne, He places his hand on my head and my body is immediately reduced to ashes. This vision continued for some days and now for the last few days I myself sit on the throne of Shri Ramchandra with my wife on my lap and a second image of myself comes before me to bow to me. I place my hand on the head of that image and the image is immediately reduced to ashes. After that my images on the throne and my wife's image disappear and there appears a purple light on the throne and the mind becomes devoid of thought. I have a great desire to remain in this state for a long time, but in a very short time a trembling sensation spreads over the whole body and the mind then urges me to leave off and not to remain in that state. I have then to leave meditation and have to get up. When I practise meditation by sitting in a posture, I have to leave the posture, and if I am meditating by lying down at ease, the mind gets out of control and thoughts begin to come. The mind cannot be concentrated, it raises the standard of revolt and thoughts of various kinds come crowding into it. The Great Yogi to whom I was taken by Maruti as described above was none else but Shri Vasishtha, - a fact which I later on learnt from your lips. Afterwards Maruti took me for the Darshan of the Great Yogi Shri Machindranath. I saw Machindranath sitting near a beautiful lady and I in the form of a small child crawled and sat upon the lap of the Great Yogi, who placed me on the lap of that lady. I think that I was that small child. Then I was handed over to Gorakha and he put me to death. At present I do not see this vision. I think that you yourself do not wish that this vision should be continued or you might have thought it to be unnecessary for the present and hence I think further developments have been stopped.

For the last two or three days, a light resembling a search light appears to issue from the eye at the centre between the eye-brows and my mental worship is being performed in that searchlight. I have already written above that I see the sea and while I am sitting in a posture there for some time, I see the full moon shining over my head. Sometimes this moon sheds its light or its rays or perhaps the substance of which it is made like snow on my body and my whole body becomes covered over with that substance and then I cannot see anything. When I try to see by removing the substance aside I find that instead of my body, there is Shri Vishnu or Shri Krishna.

I have thus stated my experiences in detail.

At Your Feet,
(Sd.) VISHWANATH.

V

Experiences of Mr. Bhabani Charan Sidhanta,
a resident of Calcutta.

I am a resident of Calcutta in Bengal. There I was employed in the Judicial Department on Rs.140/-. I have a wife and three children. I am a devotee of Kali and used the name of the Goddess for my meditation and Japa. In Calcutta there are a number of cults or missions named after their founders-the great Yogis or Bhaktas of Kali. In these missions the heads are generally Sanyasis but I found them not of very good moral principles. I visited these missions and approached the heads with a view to obtain the knowledge of the way to the realisation of the Almighty; but I am sorry to say that I failed. Not only that but I found them no better than ordinary Grihasthas.

During the last five years I was very much keen on having Guru-
Upadesh (Initiation at the hands of a Guru) for spiritual realisation. One day while I was lying down on my bed half awake, I observed a ray of light between the eye-brows. It remained for about ten minutes and then disappeared. This ray of light encouraged me to leave my service and home and go forth in quest of God.

I first went to Kamakashi where in the cave of a mountain I saw a Yogi with long hair on his head sitting in a posture in mediation for three days and nights. I waited for him to come to consciousness, without taking any food, in the hope that this Yogi would lead me to the path of God. When the Yogi came to consciousness he asked me who I was and the purpose for which I had gone there. I explained to him the object of my visit to which he replied that he has got nothing with him of the nature I wanted. He gave me ashes from the fire in his front and told me that I would be able to get gold out of the ashes for my daily requirements. I then refused to have the ashes. I was then fed by the Yogi with dainties and fruits as sweet as nectar, produced on the miracle. I left him and came back to Calcutta. Then I went to Baidyanath, a place of pilgrimage in Bengal and remained there for about six months practising Dhyana, repeating the name of Kali, spending my time in Japa. One day while in Dhyana I heard a loud voice ordering me to go to Brindaban. I obeyed it and went to that place. I remained there for about nine months, visited all the Mahants but I found no person worthy of giving me Guru-
Updesha. My mind would revolt when at any time I thought of taking Guru-
Upadesha from any of the Mahants. I, however got Darshan of Shri Krishna and Shiva in a dream, each of whom advised me to utter his own name. On waking up I began to think about the dream and decided to repeat "Hari, Hari", Instead of "Kali". I went back to Calcutta and there I again heard a loud voice in Dhyana ordering me to go to Brindaban .

I accordingly went to Brindaban and continued my practice of repeating "Hari, Hari" there. But I could not get any Guru to Guide me. After six months I

again heard a voice ordering me to go to Nasik. I had no money as all my finances had by this time been exhausted. So I walked from Brindaban to Nasik and stopped there with the Mahanta of the Chatus Sampradaya Akhada. I enquired with the Mahanta whether there was any Yogi in Nasik. One of his disciples knew about Shri Gajanana Maharaja and took me to him. On my appearing before him my first impression was that I was sitting before Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and I felt that was the place where I would find my Guru.

On the 15th of October 1938, which was a Saturday, I went Shri Gajanana Maharaja at about 9 a.m. He took compassion on me, gave me the mantra of "Soham" and placed his hand on my head. As soon as he did so, there was a big sound of "Soham", my mind became concentrated and void of ideas and a wave of extraordinary joy arose in my heart. This feeling of joy lasted till the next day which was Sunday. On that day I again went to Maharaja at 9 a.m., and sat before him in meditation. The sound "Soham" which was big became more and more minute, until I could see the Sahasradala lotus (the thousand-petalled lotus in the centre of the brain) in a dim light.

That evening I again went to Maharaja to take his permission to go home. He asked me to begin my worldly life again and said that I would experience real joy even while carrying on worldly life. That night when I was sitting in meditation at the place where I was putting up at Nasik, I found that a flood of joy poured itself upon me and I could see before me the form of my Sadguru Shri Gajanana Maharaja.

On Monday the 17th of October 1938, at 10 a.m. I went to Maharaja's Darshana and after taking his permission left Nasik.

(Sd.) BHABANI CHARANA SIDHANTA.

VI

Extracts from the Letters written by Mr. Ganesh Ramchandra Bhide, Khole Galli, Dhulia, to Shri Gajanana Maharaja, at Parel, Bombay.

(1)

Dhulia, 14-11-26

Deep respects to Shri Gajanan Maharaja,

I am practising meditation according to your orders. I pass half-an-hour every morning and evening in Japa and meditation.

I was under a false delusion that I had taken great pains in the spiritual path but my eyes were opened by coming in contact with you. I now see that through your grace alone I can make any progress. There is no other way.

Yours humbly,
(Sd.) GANESH BHIDE.

(2)

Dhulia, 26-12-26

I have made no progress worth writing to you. But I am continuing practice according to your orders. I have nothing particular to write. I, however, feel that I must write again and again and pray that as you have taken me under your protection the whole responsibility of my spiritual welfare lies upon you.

Your humble disciple,
(Sd.) GANESH BHIDE.

(3)

Dhulia, (no date).

Many humble salutations to Shri Sadguru Gajanana Maharaja,

Your kind favour of 19-12-27 was received today. Although now I see the shining spark very rarely, still about 4 or 5 days ago at about 6 a.m. while I was in the border-land between sleep and wakefulness, I actually got your Darshan. I passed the whole day in great joy.

It appears certain that some good actions done in previous births must be bearing fruit. Otherwise I could not have the good fortune of meeting you. For the purpose of getting a guide I wandered upto Pandharpur but it was of no use and I met you in my own place.

Your humble disciple,
(Sd.) GANESH BHIDE,

(4)

A Post-Card.

Dhulia, 29-4-27

Many humble salutations to Shri Gajanana alias Sahajanada Maharaja,

I know all the problems in spiritual matters but only in words. I say by word of mouth that I see in this world all incarnations of the divine spirit. But the real difficulty is how to enter the path which will lead by meditation to the state of absolute oneness (Adwaita), merely by this wordy knowledge.

I am practising meditation keenly and without any mistakes and I am waiting anxiously for the transference of your divine power. Without it my practice is of no use. It is zero which without a figure (your support) behind it is absolutely valueless. My whole responsibility lies upon you.

Your humble disciple,
(Sd.) GANESH BHIDE.

Dated 8-7-27

Many humble salutations to Shri Sadguru Gajanana Maharaja,

I received your kind letter of 21-2-27. It is very sweet.

You have explained in details many things which are very useful to a Sadhak (aspirant and student), although you say that you do not know anything.

Although I have been in your company only for a very short time, you have explained these things to me with great affection. I only wish that I might be able to stand your test. You have ordered me to get to know firmly and fully the spark (Bindu) on the top of OM, which OM is merely a form of Sadashiva (Supreme Soul). But I cannot now see the spark as often as I used to see two days prior to your departure. Now I see it only occasionally.

About, 15 days ago I could see a blue spark having the form of an eye.

I am, however, continuing the practice.

Your humble servant,
(Sd.) GANESH BHIDE

VII

A letter written by Mr. Madhavrao Vaidya from Dhulia to Shri Gajanana Maharaja on 22-11-1926 containing some of his Spiritual Experiences.

Dhulia, 22-11-26

Many salutations to the feet of Shri Maharaja. I was extremely glad to receive your letter containing your blessings. I am writing this to let you know a peculiar experience which I got in the night of the day next to that when I wrote to you my first letter. On that night at about 11-30 or 12 I got up and went outside and when I returned to my bed, I fell down suddenly. After falling down I felt that I came to consciousness. I had only dim recollection of having gone out and come back. Only I could not say whether my eyes then had been closed or open. I felt that I had become awake only when I fell down. Both my knees were slightly injured and I was limping for a day or two. Since then I am being very careful.

At present the internal light is all right. Sometimes I am able to make out clearly that you appear in the internal sky. Day before yesterday on Saturday night you appeared and I could see you when you were going away.

There is no real difference whether you are here near me or at Parel. The difference is merely outward. I can hear you talking or laughing, at night time.

Last Sunday I was sitting in the afternoon in the house of Mr. Pradhan where I had been to see Dada Raje (Postmaster). I remembered the very first day when I met you and then as usual I lay down having shut my eyes. I suddenly got the Darshan of some personage in the interior of my heart, only the head could be seen. The hair was tied like a woman's, the line parting the hair was clearly seen. In the left ear there was some gold ornament like an ear-ring. I could not see the face because it was bent down. The head appeared as big as yours. My mind told me that it must be Shri Gulabrao Maharaja and then I got his Darshan. I was greatly delighted, Mr. Dada Raje from downstairs called me two times or three times but I could not reply. Then Bapu called me two times. I then thought that they were calling me because some one must have come.

I then recovered complete consciousness and went downstairs and found that Raosaheb Gupte had arrived. Then all of us went to Mr. Saswadkar and having sat there for some time I returned home. Sometimes at night I see some stern faces. Yesterday night, however, I saw two faces of some Mahatmas and had their Darshan. For the last two or three days I get the Darshan in the interior of my heart more distinctly. I am enjoying great peace of mind. This is nothing but the result of your grace. Small particulars will be told when we personally meet. Pundit is doing all right. Raosaheb Gupte's wife is not enjoying good health. All others are doing well. I could not meet Nana and Mr. Bhide. Mr. Sakharampant sends you his salutations.

Your humble disciple,
MADHAV

Regarding Mr. Madhavrao Vaidya, there are certain experiences of his, which have been described in "Guru Shishya Vijnan Deepika." A gist is given below :-

While Shri Gajanana Maharaja was staying at Dhulia in the house of Mr. Raje, Postmaster, Mr. Madhav Atmaram Vaidya who was residing at Dhulia, got a keen desire to obtain the grace of some Sadguru. For seven months he was eating the leaves of the bitter neem tree and performing the daily routine religious practices but with a keen desire for obtaining the grace of a Sadguru and he was praying incessantly to God, that he might meet such a Master. Mr. Annasaheb Patwardhan of Poona then happened to visit Dhulia and Mr. Vaidya approached him and prayed to be initiated. He gave him assurance that he would meet with a worthy master and gave him his blessings. The blessings were soon fructified and Mr. Vaidya met Shri Gajanana Maharaja and worshipped him, putting firm faith in him.

Shri Gajanana Maharaja then told him how to practise meditation. He practised it with great faith and with ease got experiences. From the pit of

Muladhar (the plexus situated at the anus) he saw a white post standing erect and saw the Kundalini in the form of a snake moving upon it. By that path he went up to the centre between the eye-brows and there drank the imperishable nectar.

He has been going through these experiences daily.

VIII

Spiritual experiences of Mr. D. D. Bhawe, Nasik.

(1) On 10-12-37 i.e. on the 4th day of the dark half month of Margashirsha Shaka 1859, Shri Gajanana Maharaja conferred his grace upon me by giving me the Mantra "Soham" (I am He) and ordered me to repeat it for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening every day in a sitting position. I began to do so and found that I could concentrate my mind also but sometimes a series of thoughts came obtruding. Hence although the repetition of the Mantra continued by the mouth there was a break in the concentration.

(2) After four days had thus elapsed, he made me sit in front of him and having placed his hand on my head controlled the current of my thoughts to such an extent that even the image in a photo which I used to bring up before my mind's eye ceased coming. In short I became void of thought. When I asked him regarding this he said "As your practice (study) is different from that told to others before you, it is necessary for me to stop the whole current of your thought. You simply go on repeating the Mantra "Soham". I shall take care of everything else."

(3) After this owing to domestic difficulties and owing to my sickness and owing to my having gone to stay for a good many days with Shri Upasani Maharaja of Sakori, to whom I was for a long time previously in the habit of going, for about four or five months there was no further progress. Only the Japa of Soham was continued. In the month of May 1938 after my return from Sakori, Shri Gajanana Maharaja one day ordered me to perform the worship of his Guru Shri Narayan Saraswati every day mentally. As I had a previous practice of mentally worshipping Shri Upasani Maharaja, I could do as I was ordered and performed the mental worship fully and in all its details. The only special thing in this worship was that after the whole worship, when Naivedya (oblation) and Arati (turning round of the lamp or lighted camphor) would be over, I used to make him lie down on a bedstead and then to begin pressing his feet and complete the whole thing only after seeing that he had gone to sleep. On the very first day when I was performing this mental worship according to Maharaja's order, I, in order to see whether Shri Narayan Saraswati was asleep, removed the covering over his head and instead of seeing him I saw Shri Gajanana Maharaja sleeping there. I then woke him up and worshipped him also. Since then my daily worship is of this kind but now occasionally there is conversation also.

(During this period only two experiences are worth mentioning viz.—(1) Cessation of thought and (2) the seeing of Shri Gajanana Maharaja in place of Shri Narayan Saraswati).

(4) Later on, one day he told me that there are two paths of Yoga, one of light and one of darkness. But both these paths lead to the same goal. From the very next day I found myself moving in darkness at the time of meditation and felt the sensation that Japa was going on in the navel region.

(5) As practice increased, the period of meditation began to last for three hours but I could see no visions as are seen by other disciples who have been favoured by Maharaja. There was only dense darkness. Owing to this I had loving disputes with him. He only used to smile and give me assurances.

(6) About that time I read a book written by Mr. Vaidya of Islampur entitled "The vision of the Six Chakras and Passing through them." I had also read "Devayana Pantha" (the path of light) written by the same author. I had, therefore, an idea that progress in Yoga one must go by the path of light and hence I was carrying on discussions with Maharaja. But he never said anything more than merely giving me assurances.

(7) Maharaja then ordered me to practise according to five elements, upwards and downwards : Prithwi (Earth) at the anus (where Adhara Chakra is situated), Apa (Water) at the stomach or abdomen, Tejas (Light) at the navel region, Vayu (Air) at the cavities of the nose upto the eye-brows and Akasha (Ether) at the head and Brahmarandhra (centre of the brain). In this practice I began to experience heaviness when I was in Prithwi (Earth) element, felt the sensation of a bath in the Sea or in rivers, when I was in Apa (Water) element, when I was in Tejas (Light) element I felt that I was sitting in the midst of five blazing fires round about me and felt the burning sensation on my body; when I was in Vayu (Air) element, I felt that my body contracted and expanded and felt myself very light ; when I was in Akasha (Ether) element, I felt I was flying up in the air and heard various sounds. With all this my desire to see visions did not cease and my discussions with Maharaja on the point still continued.

(8) Then Maharaja told me to repeat Vyankatesh Stotra every day at midnight. I began to repeat it five times every day commencing at midnight.

(9) Since I began this, my desire of seeing visions slowly began to dwindle down till it disappeared altogether. The reason appears to be that I had arrived at some step in real experience, a description of which is given below : -

(10) *Sweet Smells* :- No fragrant thing being nearby, I suddenly at odd times begin to feel the smell of Dhupa (incense), scented sticks, camphor, Bukka (sweet smelling black powder) and other attars (essences) of rose, Mogra and Ketaka and of various other things. Sometimes I do not feel the smell but members of my family, including even children, feel these

smells. I narrate the following incident which actually happened as an illustration of this:-

My son Lakshman had failed in the B. Com. Examination and had gone to his elder brother at Nagpur. He came from Nagpur here (at Nasik) for proceeding to Bombay to appear for his B. Com. examination. He expressed a desire to go to Maharaja regarding whom he had got some information from my friend Mr. Ghanekar, who particularly mentioned the fact that while Maharaja smokes a cigarette a fragrant smell like that of a scented stick is felt. To witness this fact personally (although he did not tell me so) he accompanied me to Maharaja. At that time neither he nor myself felt any smell; and we returned home after sitting for some time. Next day he said to me that he had heard that in the Durbar of Maharaja sweet smells are felt but that he had not felt any smell during his visit. I replied, "You might not have felt." But I thought that the young generation is likely to characterise all such things as false unless they are given some experience of the powers of Yoga.

With this idea I concentrated my mind and in meditation brought before my mind's eye Maharaja smoking a cigarette while lying on his bedstead in his house. While I was engrossed in this contemplation the fragrant smell of scented sticks was felt to be pervading all the six rooms in my house. My son was moving from room to room trying to trace the source of the smell. He came to me and asked me about it. I replied to him that Maharaja himself had given this proof to him. The smell continued for about five minutes more and then stopped. On another occasion while I was performing worship mentally my wife came near me and asked me whether I had besmeared myself with rose-attar. She said that the whole house was full of that smell. I however, did not feel any smell. She, however, smelt the shawl covering my body. There was no smell but it pervaded the whole house.

(11) Owing to a feeling of lightness I feel that if I assume any posture I am going up. If I am lying down on one side the body is supported only on one bone of the hip which touches the ground while the remaining part of the body towards the feet and towards the head rises up. At this time my limbs i.e. hands and feet become contracted. Even when I am sitting, only a small portion of my hips slightly touches the ground while the thighs remain without support. Similarly while walking I feel as if I am hopping.

(12) When the form of my Master becomes manifest in my heart my whole body feels expansion.

(13) I feel the throbbing of "Soham" in every hair over the whole of my body.

(14) Throughout the day and even at night there is a trance-like feeling of "Soham", owing to which I do not get sleep for more than an hour or two.

(15) When I offer 'Naivedya' (oblations) to my Master at the time of the mental worship I feel that it goes into my stomach because my Master then is not in front of me but is in the interior of my heart. Owing to this,

belchings full of the good smell of the dishes offered come out and I feel as if my belly is full. When, therefore, I sit for my meals, as soon as I take a mouthful or two my belly becomes full. I take my meals only once and at night only a cup of milk. Even though the food I consume is very little still I do not feel that my strength has decreased in the least.

(16) I see the "Kundalini" sitting coiled up at the centre between two eye-brows.

(17) I experience the characteristics of the female and see myself playing with Shri Krishna.

(Experiences narrated below have been undergone while sitting on the lap of my Master Shri Gajanana Maharaja and going up into the sky.)

(18) One day during my Sandhya adoration, at the time of offering the oblations of water to the Sun I sat upon the lap of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, went to the orb of the Sun, offered the oblations there, repeated the Japa of Gayatri there and returned in the same manner. Since, then this programme is going on everyday. There (in the sun) there is a house square in size made of gold and costly jewels and the light of that very house spreads over the whole of the universe. Shree Soorya-Narayan (Sun Deity) who is inside is also of a dazzling appearance but no trouble of heat is felt even though he is approached. But a sensation of extreme heat is felt on the body while entering the house or coming out of it. While going up towards the Sun and while coming down heat is felt within a short space from the Sun.

(19) Similarly once I had been to the world of the Moon. There are houses, roads, trees, gardens and forests of herbs there just like those on the earth. There is only one palace in which there are seventeen mansions for the Moon and for extraordinarily beautiful women. One staff-bearer then told us that they had been constructed for Rohini and other queens of the Moon. All other houses have white terraces on their tops. There are no tiled houses. All the twenty-four hours there is moonlight there. There is no day and night there, of course there is no necessity of lamps. When I asked a question as to how trees, gardens, creepers, and herbs grow and flourish without sunlight, I got a reply that the light which is in the Moon is derived from the Sun himself and that, that much light is sufficient for the growth of the trees. Animals there appeared to be spirited, strong and well-nourished. Lakes containing full-blown lotuses appeared everywhere. Lotuses were continually in the bloom and were giving out fragrant smell.

(20) Once we went up into the sky and saw some men, women and children crying around us. I asked Maharaja why they were crying; to which he replied that they were souls having unsatisfied desires. They were once human beings on the earth who had committed innumerable sins and were then crying being put in mind of their past sins. I, therefore, asked him, "Why do you not send them down to take birth on the earth and be their saviour?" To this Maharaja replied that to send them to the earth for taking births was not in his hands. The ruler of the universe has appointed a separate officer for

that purpose. When that officer will send them down to be born on the earth, I should save them in my next birth.

(21) Once, sitting on the lap of Shri Gajanana Maharaja I went to Vrindavan. It was nearly midnight and the place was flooded with clear moonlight. Lord Shri Krishna stood upon a stone and sounded his "Murali" (flute) and told us that He was inviting all by the sounding of the "Murali" ; and ordered us to transform ourselves into beautiful women and to go to Him. I, asked, "How are we to transform ourselves?" He replied that everything had been kept ready in the yonder bowers. Then both of us went there. (At that time Shri Gajanana Maharaja was not limping. He went walking like myself.) We two entered into two different bowers. In my bower an electric lamp was placed on a square stone. A big mirror was there and various kinds of saris and bodices were hanging on a rope. After entering I removed my clothes and stood before the mirror, when to my surprise I found that there were protuberances on my chest like the breasts of a woman. I felt a strange sensation although I was alone and I quickly snatched one bodice and put it on. It fitted me exactly. When I was about to wear a gold-bordered sari, I found that in place of the male organ I had got the female one and my whole body took upon all the characteristics of a woman's body. I know how to wear a woman's sari, so I wore it properly and having put on ornaments from a casket lying there, I stood before the mirror, when I experienced that instead of my old body I had the body of a young female of twenty. As soon as I issued out of my bower I saw Shri Gajanana Maharaja coming out of another having the form of a matronly grown-up lady. Both of us went and placed our heads on the feet of Lord Shri Krishna, when from all sides a gathering of beautiful women began to assemble there. Thousands of cows were coming running towards the spot. Some women were sitting on different trees. Lord Shri Krishna got down from that stone and arranged the Ras Mandal (the dancing circle). Then the dance began with the repetitions of "Gopal Krishna, Radha Krishna," the striking of "Tipris" (wooden pieces specially prepared) keeping time. There were different kinds of movements in circles and this continued for two or three hours. After that all Gopis each accompanied by one Shri Krishna went to different places for taking rest. When I sat with Lord Shri Krishna on a stone, He wiped of the perspiration from the various parts of my body with His own hands, drew me towards Him and closely embraced me. While embracing me He said, "By this my embrace all your desires will disappear." So saying he gave me milk from a pot of milk which was there, and again drew me towards Him and then we both went out of the bower.

From the other side Shri Gajanana Maharaja came with Shri Krishna and then we (Maharaja and myself) in our original forms returned to Nasik.

(22) Once while I was performing my Sandhya adoration, a thought arose in my mind that I should enter the astral body of Maharaja in order to know the whole path of Yoga. At the time of meditation, accordingly, I went in my astral body to the house of Maharaja and saw that a man was sitting near him. Still I went close to Maharaja when he said that he was ill and that I should not enter him when he was in that condition He rebuked me and drove me away. I started and went to some place at a great distance, which

appeared to be a place of meeting together of the followers of the Nath-Pantha. There on a high stone Shri Adinath Shankar was sitting. Below him on both sides of him, that is, to the right and to the left, the nine Nathas (Goraksha, Jalandar and others) were sitting on stones and below them the great Maharaja (Shri Narayan Saraswati Maharaja) and Shri Gajanana Maharaja were sitting.

Leaving some space in the middle, at some distance there was a large gathering of Gosavis having Bhairava Zolis (orange-coloured cloth tied with two knots thrown round the shoulder). I asked one of them as to who all those people were. He replied that those sitting at a distance from the gathering were all adepts in the Nath Pantha. I then went and stood behind Shri Gajanana Maharaja. At that time all those personages were carrying on discussions on the Nath Pantha. They were talking so fast that it was impossible for me to remember and keep in mind the talk. But the substance of all that conversation was that one must have only firm faith in the "Soham" Mantra of the Nath Pantha. One can then get all experiences of the path of Yoga in this very birth and one's individual soul would then become the supreme soul (Shiva, who is the Adinath). There is no necessity of effecting an entrance into some one else's body. I think that this last sentence was solely directed towards me as I had proceeded to effect an entrance in Shri Gajanana Maharaja's body.

(23) One day when I had been to Maharaja in the evening as usual for his Darshan, Maharaja said that one must worship Shakti. Then one gets all the Siddhis (powers) of the Yoga path. Only care must be taken of not utilising those powers for oneself. There must not be a single thing in the Yoga path which one does not understand.

Next day when I sat for meditation early in the morning the Goddess having six arms, whom I had once seen before, stood before me and told me to make the Japa of the Mantra

**"Namo Daivye Mahadaivye Shivaiyye Satatam Namahaa |
Namaha Prakrutyyeh Bhadravyeh Niyataha Pranataha Sma Tam||"**

(A bow to the great Goddess, a bow always to Her who is goodness itself; a bow to the good Prakriti (the material cause of the Universe), we always bow to Her.)

She said that by that Japa one can acquire the whole power of the Universe in oneself, saying which she disappeared. After I had repeated the Japa for about a week or fortnight the Goddess again appeared before me and said, "I have not got six arms, I have only two. But I showed six arms to you as I had to put down your six enemies (the six passions) and for that purpose I had equipped myself with six arms. But now there is no necessity for me to put down your six enemies as they are being slowly conquered by you without an effort by the Japa of the Mantra "Soham". I have originally only two arms and one should meditate upon me in that form. Because my form of two arms represent Dwaita (duality) and through this Dwaita you have to go into Adwaita (oneness)."

Now in this series of experiences one incident occurred actually in the physical world, which is narrated below :-

The wife of one of my friends becomes on certain days possessed by the spirit of the Goddess (representing the Goddesses of the temples in various noted places such as Sapta Shringa etc.). On one Friday I went to the Goddess (i.e. my friend's wife possessed by the spirit of the Goddess) and asked Her about the result of my son's examination. The reply received was that he would be successful. He accordingly passed the examination. But she then immediately changed Her posture and having removed the garland of flowers from Her neck, she placed it round my neck and said, "Place this Prasad in a small case and keep it near you whenever you meditate on the Goddess. Owing to this you will get messages from the Goddess (Shakti)." I then bowed to Her and came back to my seat. Then my friend, her husband asked her, "According to the usual custom you change your posture only twice representing the possession by the spirit of the Goddess of two places only. Why was then today a change of posture for the third time?" To this the Goddess replied, "This devotee has come to me, I had to do so for giving him Prasad. He meditates upon Shakti."

I narrated this incident next day to Shri Gajanana Maharaja. He said "Through the grace of my Guru you have acquired so much power that the Goddess has of her own accord given you her Prasad although you had not asked or begged for it. Among all these different stages of the powers of Shakti, the power of "Soham" is the most exalted."

When I meditate on this Goddess Shakti, that is, when I place Her form in my heart and then continue repeating the Japa of "Soham," I see in the interior of Her form Shri Krishna sitting on a high seat, Shri Narayan Saraswati sitting on a seat near Shri Krishna's feet and Shri Gajanana Maharaja sitting on a third seat near Shri Narayan Suraswati's feet, all enveloped in light.

(24) The light which I see is a mixture of White, Red and Yellow colour.

(25) I once casually said to Shri Gajanana Maharaja that while I was staying with Upasani Maharaja at Sakori, I used to see, the form of Shri Sai Maharaja while meditating upon the form of Upasani Maharaja, and in the same manner now here Shri Narayan Saraswati appears in my heart in the place of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Upon this Shri Gajanana Maharaja told me to see what other things would appear from that day. From the next day Shri Gajanana Maharaja appeared everywhere and the trance-like state increased.

Whenever I narrate any of my experiences to Maharaja, he remains quiet as he sees the things by entering my mind and disposes of the matter by merely one word of abuse. But whenever I describe the particular path in my body by which I go, he explains things over and over again in order that I may be able to describe the thing properly.

Although I have described so many things above, still I do not feel I have acquired any power myself and it is my earnest prayer the feet of my master that He should give me power to save others without any consciousness on my part.

(Sd.) D. D BHAVE

Further experiences of Mr. D. D. Bhave, Nasik.

From the 1st or 2nd of May 1939 Maharaja began to suffer from influenza with the addition of "Broncho Pneumonia". It was a very serious illness. On the 8th of that month I accompanied by my friend Mr. Bhagwat went in the evening as usual to Maharaja's house for Darshan. At that time Mr. Nanasaheb Gadkari was stopping with Maharaja. He came to the door and said to us that as Maharaja was seriously ill we should take Darshan from the door itself and go away. Upon this I said, "We shall only place our head on his feet and go away without speaking with him." We then entered and placed our heads on his feet. At that time a small electric lamp was burning in the room. As soon as we did so I saw a dazzling light pervading the whole room. Shri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, sitting in a corner, were giving out streaks of that light. I became confused, my brain became dizzy, my eyesight was dazzled and I returned home in the same condition. The effect of that sight remained on my mind till the next day.

On or about the 25th of May 1939, I had been to the crematorium for the funeral of a dead woman. People were arranging the pyre and doing other necessary things. While I was sitting there I fell into a sort of trance and saw a vision like a cinema film in which in a short time the whole process of how the human body is created from the five elements was seen. I give a brief description below of what I saw :-

The drop resulting from the coitus of man and woman expanded and formed into the skin that is the external body. This was the Annamaya Kosha (covering formed of food). Along with it bones and flesh were formed. Then all the veins and arteries were also formed. This was the Pranamaya Kosha (covering formed of breath).

Then desire or mind (owing to which the cycle of births is there) entered that body. While this process was going on I could see the woman getting up and eating something. I could infer from this that as the woman at the time of her death had a desire to eat, she must have immediately got a new birth. I later on came to know that two or three hours prior to her death, the woman had actually asked for rice and "Pithale" (gram floor soup).

Lastly Ananda (Bliss or Joy) entered the body, which then became alive as a human body.

Then the reverse process was seen. The door of the Anandamaya Kosha became closed and I returned to the Vasana Deha (the covering or

body of desires). I saw again the old woman eating something. Then that door was closed and I began to see the Pranamaya Kosha and the bones, veins and arteries etc. Then I could see only the external skin. In this manner I went from the external body to the Anandamaya Kosha and came back to the external body.

(Sd.) D. D. BHAVE

IX

Experiences of Mr. Vishnupant Chaphekar,
Retired Balliff, District Court, Nasik.

I am a Brahmin, a follower of the Vedic tradition and devoted to the path of action (rituals etc.). Like other people of the world I, too, used to attend Kirtans (religious sermons), Purans and also used to go to listen to discussions on the Vedanta philosophy. My mind, however, attained no peace. I was for about twenty five years repeating the Japa of Gayatri and also the Japa of the mantra of Vasudeo having twelve letters in it (i.e. the mantra Namoh Bhagvate Vasudevaya). Still I obtained no peace of mind. But I thought that if I would meet with a real saint, I would get peace of mind and my life in this world would then have fulfilled its object. When I was at Sinnar I happened to meet Amritanath alias Baba Maharaja Kopargaonkar of Kopargaon. He gave me advice regarding spiritual matters and encouraged me to follow my usual practice. But even though twelve years passed after that, restlessness of mind did not stop, no peace was attained and no spiritual experience was gained. I used often to go to Kopargaonkar Maharaja and on one occasion I prayed to him that although I was following his advice for the last so many years I had not got any spiritual experience and he should, therefore, confer his grace upon me. He listened attentively to what I said and replied, "The ground of your mind has been now prepared and you will very soon meet with a saint of self-realisation and your life's task will be fulfilled. Besides this I do not owe anything to you. You will get a Guru of real self-experience. Do not ruin yourself by looking merely to his external conduct. Even if people blame you for accepting initiation from him, do not feel sorry for it. What ever he will tell you, look upon it as coming from me and follow it accordingly." After this I always remained longing to meet this Sadguru and continued my former practice.

Four years passed after that and I was transferred to Nasik. There I heard that at Dhyana Yogi, one Gajanana Maharaja, had come to Nasik. I made an attempt four or five times to take his Darshan but he sent me away with abusive words. From the appearance of his face I thought he was in super conscious state akin to madness but I felt that this must be the Saint hinted at by Amritanath Kopargaonkar. Then on the Dattajayanti day in the month of Margashirsha in the year 1933 (December), I went to him and caught hold of his feet and prayed, "I am now in the last years of my life and I have come to you with a sincere desire that my life should have its real fulfilment. Save me or not as you like." As soon as I said this he raised me up with great affection and spoke words of consolation to me. Then I began to go

to him daily and listen to his words of advice for about an hour or two. Fifteen days later he told me that I should sit at night in darkness and try to make my mind peaceful. When I did this for four or five days my mind got peace through his grace. Seven or eight days later, when I had been to him in the morning, he made me sit near him, whispered the Mantra "Soham" in my ear, removed my cap and placed his hand on my head. He made me sit for an hour and made me repeat that Mantra internally without pronouncing the words with the mouth. When I began to repeat the Mantra, my eyes shut of themselves and before my internal sight there appeared a brilliant light. I mentioned this fact to Maharaja when I later on recovered full consciousness. He thereupon said, "Continue your Brahmakarma (duties of a Brahman) as you have been doing so long. Do not leave it. I know your Guru Kopergaonkar. Do not leave the Mantra which he has given you. Only after all your ritual is over, repeat without break the Mantra "Soham" internally. After he said this, I bowed to his feet and started to go away but Maharaja again asked me to sit down. As soon as I sat down, my mind became concentrated and I saw a big sphere-like ball which broke up and twelve times successively there was the sound like that of the discharge of canon-balls and a brilliant light began to shine through it and I felt that somebody from inside was telling me not to fear. A short time after that I regained consciousness and then experienced a feeling of great joy and all my restlessness disappeared.

After I obtained the grace of Maharaja, I found that the Japa of "Soham" naturally of its own accord began to be repeated internally. A month later various visions began to be seen. All the deities appeared in a ball of light. Rivers, the sea, beast, different kinds of temples, gardens, jungles, saints and sages began to appear enveloped in light like scenes on a cinema screen and then to disappear.

A year after I was admitted into Maharaja's grace, Kopergaonkar Maharaja came to me. As soon as I saw him, I felt overflowing joy, I placed my head upon his feet and narrated to him the whole account regarding my meeting with my Sadguru which I had through his (Kopergaonkar's) grace. He was very glad to hear it and he asked me to take him to Gajanana Maharaja. I did accordingly. Both the Maharajas embraced each other closely. Words fail me in describing that meeting of the two saints. Kopergaonkar Maharaja said to Gajanana Maharaja, "I have entrusted this child (me) to you," to which Gajanana Maharaja replied, "If you give me the power, what would I not be able to do? I want only your grace. I am only a servant of your feet." All people who were then sitting there were quite wonderstruck at seeing the meeting and hearing this talk.

One day in the evening instead of going to the Godavari for my Sandhya-adoration, I went to Maharaja. He asked me why I had been there instead of giving Arghya (oblations of water) to the Sun and performing my Sandhya. I replied that I had been there through his (Maharaja's) inspiration. He then told me not to have any misgivings but to go home and quietly perform my Sandhya. Accordingly I went home, performed my Sandhya and after having taken my evening meals, I as usual sat for meditation, when I saw the Sun just as by day. I narrated this next day to Maharaja, who said

that as the Sun of knowledge had arisen in my heart, I could very easily see at any time the moon, the sun and the stars. And I am getting experience of these visions.

On another occasion Maharaja told me to repeat "Soham" in a very low voice first and then to repeat it in a very loud voice. While I was doing so, I heard some one else doing the same and I became absorbed in the sound and became submerged in joy. At that time I was sitting near the river, whose waters were rising and my dhotar became wet but I was unconscious of all this and it was only when people round about raised cries that I regained consciousness. I had been at the time entirely absorbed in meditating upon the joyful countenance and the dress of Shri Gajanana Maharaja and in worshipping him mentally. I then got up quickly and went in haste to Gajanana Maharaja and told him what had happened. I was greatly wonderstruck to see the same dress hanging on a peg there, which I had seen Maharaja wearing in my meditation. I asked him why it was so to which he replied that he had only put me to a test.

As described above I continually see various visions and hear sounds, being absorbed in which I pass hours after hours. The net result is that, my attention is less and less directed to worldly matters and cares, and my mind is always at peace. What is really wanted is this viz. absolute cessation of pain and pleasure. This cannot be attained without the grace of Sadguru.

(Sd.) VISHNUPANT CHAPHEKAR.

X

Experiences of Madhukar Damodar Chitnis,
a student in St. George's School, Nasik.

I was born in Nasik. My father has long been acquainted with Mr. Bhise, with whom Shri Gajanana Maharaja stays. I am now telling things which happened when Shri Gajanana Maharaja probably came for the first time to Nasik. I was about 6 or 7 years old then. My father used to go occasionally to Mr. Bhise's house and saw Gajanana Maharaja there. He at that time had no faith that he was a Yogi or a Maharaja, because there were no signs or characteristics in his conduct showing that he was a Saint or a Yogi. His dress was like that of an ordinary gentleman, his conversation was quite ordinary and full of wit, humour and jokes. Sometimes when the whim was there, he used to speak abusive words also. Women in my family also had no faith in him. Besides Maharaja too did not ask any one to sit near him, nor did he himself go to anybody's house.

A few days later, however, my father had a dream in the early morning in which some one said to him in a clear voice that Maharaja was a great saint and that my father should go to him and get initiated by him and fulfil the great object of human life. My father was greatly delighted at this dream and told it to me and all the members of my family. He then took his bath and then took us all to Shri Gajanana Maharaja. He saw that he was then lying down on a

cot. We all bowed down to him. He shouted out "I am not a Maharaja or a Saint. I am also not a pseudo-saint cheating people. I am an ordinary man like you. Hence I do not like these foolish acts of yours." He then asked us to go back, which we did. My father once more went to him and prayed to him. Then He said, "You come on Thursday, then I shall do as I may be inspired by my Sadguru." Then on the very next Thursday myself and my father went to him with a cocoanut, a garland of flowers and one rupee as Dakshina and my father got himself initiated. Maharaja returned the rupee and materials of worship to my father and told my father to offer the things to our household deities as he had not as yet arrived at a stage of being worshipped. He further said, "I am neither a saint nor a Maharaja but owing to you being acquainted with me I am telling you the "Soham" Mantra told to me by my Guru. In this I am simply doing my duty. That Mantra has great powers as it has come out of the mouth of a saint of great self-realization and owing to its powers a man is sure to have the goal of human life fulfilled. Meditate on Shri Krishna and repeat this Mantra "Soham" in your mind. Instead of worshipping physically, worship mentally my Guru Shri Narayan Saraswati. That worship will, rest assured, reach me." He then asked us to go away and we returned home with the worshipping materials returned by Maharaja.

After that my father got many experiences on the path of Yoga, which he narrated to us. Some of them are given below :-

Within two months he began to see light at the centre between the eye-brows and Shri Gajanana Maharaja sitting in that light and my father worshipping him there. Conversations were carried on between my father and Shri Gajanana Maharaja. All this appeared to my father while in meditation. Then he got the Darshan of all deities in place of Gajanana Maharaja but he had a talk only with Maharaja. During these visions a fragrant smell pervaded our whole house.

When I became about 16 or 17 years old, I used to wonder at these experiences narrated by my father. I, however, was unable to put any faith in them. I used to say that there are many Gurus regarding whom such things are told. I used to ridicule these experiences of my father and to find fault with and censure Shri Gajanana Maharaja. My father was later on transferred to various places but I continued to stay at Nasik for my education. I, however, never visited Maharaja. On the contrary whenever I heard his name mentioned anywhere I used to speak in terms of disparagement.

In 1932, I went to Peint where my father was then serving. One day at night when I was in the borderland between wakefulness and sleep I saw a round ball of light coming towards me from distance. I entered that ball or sphere and I saw dazzling light everywhere. For a long time I looked at that dazzling light with my eyes opened to their utmost power and after I shut them I still saw the light everywhere. This continued for years together, I began to suffer from headache owing to this. It stopped for some time and from 1934 it began again and is continuing still. The light began to increase in power, day by day, and I suffered so much pain that I used to put my head into water for hours together and once I dashed my forehead against a wall out of sheer

exasperation, being unable to bear the pain. But if the light disappeared I used to feel disconsolate. In this manner I passed two years in great tribulation of mind. I am at present about 24 or 25 years old. Owing to this trouble I cannot apply my mind to my studies and I have still not gone beyond Standard V.

In 1936 I suddenly had a sort of inspiration that I should sit in the Padmasana posture and practise Pranayama (control of breath). I began to do so every day sitting in solitude. A fortnight later instead of that dazzling light (which even now appears occasionally) I began to see a flame, which instead of causing any pain gave me great pleasure. About this time I began to read the works of Ramatirth, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda. I thought that I would get an idea of real knowledge from these works and I thought that this light must be somehow connected with real knowledge. I also thought that without the guidance of a Sadguru, it would be impossible to get real knowledge.

Since I began to practise Pranayama by sitting in the Padmasana posture, a flame appeared before me and I used to remain in that posture for two hours at a time unconscious even of my body although my eyes were open. But after I got up, my whole body used to ache. About six months passed in this manner. Various balls used to come out of the flame and break, and sounds like the reports of cannon-balls were heard and again balls of various colours used to come out. Some days later I saw a dazzling ball, coming out of the flame and when I touched it, it opened like a door and a path going into a deep valley was seen. I entered that valley and I saw that there was dense darkness with intermittent flashes of lighting in the light of which terrifying wild beasts like lions, tigers, and snakes were seen which caused feelings of great terror in me. When I proceeded further, I saw a blue light and the letter OM was seen in the interior of a blue-coloured sphere. When I touched this sphere one more door was opened and a lake appeared and there were many persons who had come there for a bath. I bathed there and on my return I saw various blue-coloured spheres and OM upon them.

When I recovered consciousness I found that all the clothes on my body were drenched with water. This vision was seen continually for many days. Then this change took place in the vision. When I touched the sphere which came out from the flame, a door was opened and I saw the indistinct shape of some individual. This continued for some days, after which that personage began to be distinctly seen. My eyes were dazzled at the lustre on the face of that personage. That personage used to laugh loudly at seeing me and to say something to me in Hindustani which I was unable to understand.

Later on that personage used to catch hold of my hand and show me the difficult passage inside. This vision continued for about a year. During this time that personage showed me different passages, a short description of which is given below :-

1. Once when I went inside through the door I found that there were many electric lights and the whole place was full of light. There was the

sound of thunder and that personage descended from a sphere of light and said to me, "This is a festival of lights."

2. On another occasion that personage pointed out to me at various places the abodes of deities. But I could not actually see the deities. I only saw balls of light with OM shining upon them.
3. On a third occasion he showed me the path of Kundalini and pointed out how to ascend and descend by that path. While ascending I found that the way upto the back of the head was easy. When I reached there I saw a sphere of light and a white-coloured OM upon it. Upon entering through it, I saw a zigzag way round about which there were lotuses everywhere. While descending the path was easy and lights of different kinds only were seen. After coming down I saw a pit (kunda) of a triangular shape from which flames were issuing forth. I then went up a little and I saw a dazzling light and OM in it. This OM was on a sphere which was whirling on account of which OM also appeared to be turning round. Sweet and sour sprays or drops were coming out of the sphere and entering my mouth owing to which I felt a sensation that my belly was full. This sensation remained even after I came back to consciousness and there was no desire to eat anything.
4. On the fourth occasion I went with that personage to the Muladhara Chakra (at the anus). The door of the sphere there was opened and I saw a lotus of reddish colour inside. It began to open slowly and I saw the form of Ganapati in it in an indistinct outline. I cannot properly describe it as it was indistinct. Then as we ascended a little, I saw distinctly a bluish lotus through a sphere of yellowish colour. I cannot say what deity was sitting upon it. Then I saw a sphere near the heart and a lotus of red colour of the shape of the flower of a plantain tree. When I ascended higher I saw a sphere of saffron colour upon which could be seen the head of an elephant with the trunk. I asked a question there and I got the reply that it was Gajachhaya (Elephant Shade). As I went up higher I saw a blue-coloured sphere in which the form of a peacock could be seen. That personage said that it was known as Mayurachhaya (Peacock Shade).

I had read the works of Ramatirtha, Ramkrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda and although I experienced some sort of pain after seeing these visions of light, still I felt a tremendous attraction towards this path. I narrated all my experiences to my maternal uncle, Mr. Raje, Postmaster, who in his turn narrated them to Shri Gajanana Maharaja. He thereupon remarked that Madhu (i.e. myself) had not seen him for the last six or seven years and even if I had gone to him I had not mentioned anything about my experiences. My maternal uncle was in a short time after this transferred to Deolali. I took a letter of introduction from him and went to see Shri Gajanana Maharaja. He listened to all the details of my experiences and then with very great solicitude explained this subject to me. He said that I was a Yogi in my former birth. Hence I could see these visions in my early life. I then had firm faith in those experiences implanted in me. I then prayed to him that he may kindly lead me to the proper path. He replied that he would do so but that I should first of all

ask about it to the Guiding Maharaja whom I saw in my visions, as otherwise he felt that he had no authority to do so.

Accordingly when I sat for meditation I asked the personage about it. He said, "You are a ripe fruit. Why did not Gajanana Maharaja then guide you?" On that very day, while that personage was taking me through the path of Kundalini, at one place which he called by the name of Bhramara Gumpha, I could not find out the way for coming out. That personage then said that I should ask about the way to Shri Gajanana Maharaja. After leaving off meditation I went accordingly to Shri Gajanana Maharaja and told him the message of that personage. Upon this he said, "You should say to that personage that although the fruit was ripe still the proper time had not arrived. Besides my (Gajanana Maharaja's) power is less than yours and hence I could not guide this boy. This work was to be done by a great Yogi like yourself." Further he told me to go into Bhramara Gumpha when I would be sitting for meditation and he said that he himself would point out the way further which was not found by my Guru (meaning that personage).

Accordingly when I again sat for meditation, I went into the Bhramara Gumpha. Shri Gajanana Maharaja appeared and pointed out the way How to get out of it and then he disappeared. Then that personage appeared and I delivered to him the message of Shri Gajanana Maharaja and told him that Shri Gajanana Maharaja after pointing out the way which could not be found by us the day before, had just then disappeared. That personage, when he heard this, appeared to be greatly pleased and asked to deliver again the following message to Shri Gajanana Maharaja, "Take this boy under your protection and teach him Dhyana Yoga completely." In this manner I was at the time doing the work of a messenger between these two Saints.

Two or three days later when I had been to Shri Gajanana Maharaja I delivered the above - mentioned message of that personage to him. At that time a book entitled, "Shatchakra Bhedan" (passing through the six chakras) written by Dr. Vaidya, was lying there. I took it up and began to read it. I suddenly got into a trance, my breath went up and the book dropped down from my hand. At the time Shri Gajanana Maharaja had gone into the inner apartment of his house. He came out and finding me insensible, shook me for a long time and brought me back to consciousness. I told him how I had gone up. He ordered me not to practise Pranayama at all and rebuked me angrily. But his face showed that inwardly he was extremely pleased. This was the first time that I went into the state of Samadhi in his presence. He then immediately initiated me and told me to repeat the Mantra "Soham" internally. I did it by sitting in front of him. I found that the Japa began to be repeated in Sahasradala (the thousand petalled lotus situated at the centre of the brain). He got it done by me twice. Then I found that the whole current of my thought was full of "Soham" and all the pain and troubles that I had to undergo owing to Pranayama stopped altogether. Not only this but my meditation decidedly got a different turn and those experiences and visions which had been shown to me by that personage in Dhyana only dimly and indistinctly became lustrous and shining and distinct owing to the Japa of "Soham" which was made internally, being brought to its fruition.

Some days later, he made me sit before him for meditation and showed me the Sahasradala Kamala (the thousand-petalled lotus situated in the centre of the brain). It first appeared of a bluish colour and then of a white colour, lustrous and full of dazzling light. At its centre a lustrous point appeared. Then a sound of distant thunder was heard succeeded by the deafening sound of lightning and there was a big sound in the Sahasradala which became full of a dazzling light and I saw that personage of my Dhyana standing on the lotus. Some time later I regained my ordinary consciousness. A few minutes later Gajanana Maharaja again made me sit for meditation and asked me to go to the Muladhar Chakra repeating "Soham". There I saw a red lotus of four petals fully opened and a small child-form of Ganapati, with curly hair on the head, standing upon it. Then he asked me to go upwards repeating "Soham" and showed me the white light at the centre between the eye-brows and OM in it. That OM then formed itself into a yellowish and whitish lotus, which again changed itself into a triangular pit of fire. When from that place I ascended to the Sahasradala, I saw that at its centre there was what appeared to be a deep under-ground cellar from which flames were issuing forth. A few moments later, a pillar of light came out of the cellar. This pillar changed its colour often and the form of Shri Krishna of blue colour was shining upon it.

On another occasion when I was sitting in meditation in front of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, I entered a majestic palace. In the square of that palace there were placed many electric lights. In the middle of the square there was a throne and all things required for worship were also there. There was a sound of thunder and that personage of my Dhyana came and sat upon the throne. I did not upto this time know his name. This day he told me that he was the Yogi Narsing Maharaja who used to sit near the eastern door of the Kala Rama temple in Panchavati. He then laughed loudly and asked me to worship him and said that, that was really known as mental worship. I accordingly worshipped him and then came back to ordinary consciousness. I then asked Shri Gajanana Maharaja about it and he said that that was the real mental worship.

Several times I have seen the Guru of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, whom we all call the great Maharaja, appearing in my meditation and accepting my mental worship in a similar manner. I once saw him (i.e. the Great Maharaja) jumping from tree to tree. I asked Shri Gajanana Maharaja about it to which he replied that he had also heard when at Antri that the Great Maharaja used to jump like that but that he had himself not seen it.

On another occasion when I was sitting near Shri Gajanana Maharaja in meditation and was going down to the Muladhar Chakra from Sahasradala, I thought I was going through a deep valley. There was partly light and partly darkness there and when I went almost to the bottom I heard the sound of "Soham" coming from above and the sound of "Koham" (who am I) coming from below. I saw a brilliant light below from which Narsing Maharaja came up and said, "I myself was asking from below "Koham" to which the reply of "Soham" came from above. Then I asked him what it meant. He said "Koham" means "Who am I" to which the answer is "Soham" i.e. "I am He" i.e. God.

On another occasion Maharaja pointed paths of Kundalini through Sushumna from Sahasradala. When I was descending from Sahasradala, a terribly dazzling light appeared from behind the neck, in which OM appeared and the mouth of a snake appeared in that OM and I entered the mouth of that snake and while I was descending through this zigzag path, I saw a lotus at each of the turnings on the back of that snake.

After coming down I saw a triangular shaped pit with flames issuing out of it. When I entered the pit through the flames I saw a big post which was enveloped in the coils of a snake. When I again began to ascend by the same zigzag path, I saw that the lotuses at the various turnings were turning themselves into shining balls which broke and various sounds of conches, anklets, flutes, bells and of thunder in the Sahasradala began to be heard.

Only about eight or ten days ago Maharaja asked me to go down to the Mulabandha (the same as Muladhar). When I went there, I saw a celestial light and I got submerged in it, all visions having disappeared. For about an hour and a half passed in this way, I being absolutely unconscious of my body. At that time Messrs. Bhawe, Chaphekar, Nanasaheb Gadkari were there. They shook me several times and tried to wake me up but I was so entirely absorbed that they did not succeed in their attempts. When I regained consciousness later on naturally, on being questioned by Maharaja I told him that I was in a state of void, merely surrounded by light.

In this manner Sadguru Gajanan Maharaja has brought me to the right path. At present I feel no trouble and I remain in this peculiar state surrounded by light, and I enjoy great happiness and peace.

(Sd.) MADHUKAR DAMODAR CHITNIS.

XI

Experiences of Mrs. Anandibai Gupte, wife of
Raosaheb S. S. Gupte, Engineer, taken down by
Rao Saheb Gupte.

I received initiation from Maharaja at Dhulia on the Gokul Ashtami day. Exactly a month after that I began to see a moon. The Japa proceeded all right. For some months more there was no further vision. Then I began to see a bright spark but at a great distance. On the 10th day of Chaitra at about one or two o'clock at night, while I was repeating the Japa I saw three extraordinary lustrous forms. My eyesight was dazzled and hence I could not distinguish the faces. This state lasted for some minutes. I then came to ordinary consciousness and made my obeisance to them. Since then, whenever I sat and performed mental worship I began to see the spark quite near, and the moon and the spark are seen always, while sitting down or getting up or even while walking.

After we came to Nasik I was made to progress further on this path and I saw internally all the parts of my body. Since then I began to see the spark in a lotus. Then a sheaf with the spark began to be seen. A sound like the tinkling of small bells began to be heard in the ears. Some time the sound of the flute (Murali) could be heard. Whenever I sat for meditation I felt as if some one was giving me explanations and advice. Once I was asked this question :—

“Oh, good lady, what will you do with the food which would remain after your hunger has been satisfied?”

Many such questions were asked but I do not remember them all now. The spark which was originally big is now minute.

Once I was greatly troubled by some domestic worries. I invoked the pity of God and sat for meditation. I became so entirely absorbed that I did not know where I was. I felt that I was merged in a blue light. The bright spark was before my eyes and I saw in it Shri Krishna in a golden colour.

Sometimes I see flowing water with the sky reflected in it and the spark in the sky. Sometimes a forest is seen with cows and deer underneath a blue sky. At present the spark seen is very small, but extremely lustrous. I get absorbed very soon and am enjoying peace and calmness of mind.

Once while I was sitting in meditation the thought arose in my mind : “They say that God is merciful. Then why does he give trouble to mankind?” I received the reply, “God does not trouble any one. Every one suffers the fruits of his actions.”

Question :- Why does He (God) make a person do such actions ?

Reply :- Man himself creates the fruit of his actions. He commits sins, deprives others of their property, and gives them troubles. Hence he suffers. God does not give anything nor does He take away anything.

Question :- Why is God not seen in Saguna form ?

Reply :- Is God your slave that He should stand before you as soon as you call Him? Call Him from the bottom of your heart. According to the degree of your devotion He will manifest Himself to you. If you call upon Him with love and devotion, He will manifest Himself in Saguna form if you desire so. If you desire Nirguna, He will manifest Himself in that way. If you call upon God with the same heart-felt cry with which you call your mother, He will manifest Himself to you. That is real devotion.

(Sd.) SHANKAR SITARAM GUPTA.
(Notes jotted down as told by my wife)

Experiences of Raosaheb Gupte, L. C. E.,
retired Engineer, Nasik.

I had the good fortune of getting the Darshana of Shri Gajanana Maharaja for the first time at Dhulia in the year 1926. He had then been on a visit to Mr. Raje, Post-Master. My friend Mr. D. M. Saswadkar, a Sub-Registrar, obtained information regarding him, his practice and progress in the path of Yoga and his high standing in that path and then communicated the information to me. Since the time I arrived at maturity of understanding, I had faith in the existence of God, which had increased owing to the various experiences and difficulties in life.

When I used to go for a walk with Mr. Saswadkar in the evening, I used to have discussions with him regarding spiritual matters. I also heard the talk of Maharaja with some people visiting him about Yoga and also saw miracles which appeared to take place at his hands easily and naturally. All these things produced a great impression upon me and I decided to get myself initiated by Maharaja with the sole object that I might enjoy peace of mind in the remaining part of my life after I retired.

On the first Monday in Shravana of that year, I managed to take Maharaja to my place in the morning. I worshipped him with great reverence and having placed a garland of flowers round his neck and having bowed to his feet humbly prayed to lead me to the path of the Lord. He asked me what particular name of the Lord I had a special liking for. I replied that I liked, "Rama nama". He then ordered me to repeat the same in mind every morning and evening at twilight time. I did this for some time. Then he ordered that I should have a picture of Shri Vishnu before me when I repeated the Japa and that I should concentrate on the form of Shri Vishnu in the picture. When I commenced doing so I saw that the form in the picture assumed a smaller size and the hands of the image were moving. I felt that the Japa was going deeper and deeper.

As the practice of the Japa was increased, my ideas slowly began to be purified and the mind began to gain in calmness and peace. When the Japa commenced being repeated internally, he ordered that I should stop looking at the picture of Shri Vishnu at the time of the Japa. At this stage Maharaja ordered me to repeat the Japa of "Soham" instead of "Rama". It is still going on. I have realised how the Ajapa Japa is going on and the mind also loses itself in it. Through the grace of my Sadguru I also see occasionally a spark of light. Many of my co-disciples see the light always and they also see various deities enveloped in light. These facts I learnt from the written notes of their experiences. I asked Maharaja about this, to which he replied that these visions are only guides taking a Sadhaka towards the bliss of Self. The visions themselves are not the real thing. These visions later on disappear and the Sadhaka then experiences the bliss of self. That is the goal of human life.

I am gradually getting experience of this bliss and I pray to his feet that through his grace, the state of Self-realisation may more and more be developed. My wife also has been favoured by Maharaja and she can daily get the Darshan of the sun, moon and Shri Krishna and even in her old age (i.e. 68 years) she sits for two hours at a stretch experiencing the joy of these visions.

I have mentioned above that I saw miracles which appeared it take place easily and naturally. In elucidation of the above statement, I write the following :-

He can send fragrance to a distant place without using any external means. I and members of my family had often experience of this in our house at Dhulia as well as at Nasik. Once when Maharaja was sitting in a room on the upper storey in the house of Mr. Pradhan at Dhulia and near him Messrs. Pradhan, Raje and Saswadkar were sitting, I saw a shower of Bukka (black scented powder) falling from above for some minutes. I had kept a quantity of that Bukka with me for several years. I saw with my own eyes at Dhulia that Maharaja turned wine into milk.

Once when he was suffering from fever, in order to keep his strength, people near him including myself decided to give him a boiled egg. When the boiled egg was broken, the internal part of it was turned into a potato, the taste and smell being exactly that of a potato. All persons present there observed this.

From the time I went to Shri Gajanana Maharaja, there was a good effect on my health also. While I was serving as an engineer under the District Local Board, Dhulia, I had hernia on the right side. I began to use a belt as advised by the doctors and at the time I used to practise Dhyana-Yoga according to the instructions of Maharaja. The swelling on the right side slowly began to subside and in about two years it disappeared altogether. For the last three years I have left off using the belt also. I regard this as result of my Sadguru's grace.

I came to Nasik in November 1927. About two years after that my wife had an attack of paralysis on her right side and she was under medical treatment. One evening Maharaja came to my place and ordered my wife to stand in front of him and to go walking to the back-door and to come back. She did so without any support. After this was repeated for four or five times, he gave her blessing that she would thenceforward feel all right.

More than five years have now passed since then. She is now feeling no effects of the paralysis at all. She is also experiencing the good effects of Shri Gajanana Maharaja's grace. This shows Maharaja's power of curing diseases.

Nasik, 21st August, 1938.

(Sd.) SHANKAR SITARAM GUPTA.

XIII

Experiences of Mr. P. L. Inamdar, Nasik.

Since the time I was a school boy I was always thinking over spiritual topics. The sight of a dead body carried along a road, like bodily ailments of a person in old age, condition of the blind and the lame and the different natures of different individuals and their different circumstances gave me food for thought which ultimately resulted in causing restlessness of mind. Except the time passed actually in the school, the whole of my other time was passed in thinking over these problems in secret and I could not do anything else sincerely. I had an aversion to read anything, not dealing with spiritual matters. A sort of fear was generated in me by pondering over these problems of life, suffering and death and I began to feel that it was the primary duty of a person to try to acquire a state of fearlessness. Seven or eight years passed in this state. I got an idea that I was some one different from the body. I was not the body. I suffered great tribulations in the attempt to satisfy my mind about the truth of the idea given about the truth of the idea given above.

I used to sit looking at my own reflection in a mirror for a long time and then direct my eyesight to my body and the various parts of it. I then got the idea in my mind that all the actions of the human body and of the whole world depended entirely on the existence of some invisible power. In order to strengthen this idea, I used to ponder over the problem for hours together. I was convinced that if the life-principle be removed from the body, the body would not be able to do anything. Hence the body was a sort of machine which works according to the will of the moving power inside. I thought and thought over these matters and was restless until I got a satisfactory explanation, of course satisfactory so far as my poor reason was concerned. I have given above a brief outline of the trend of my thoughts in those days. It is not possible to give a detailed description of all the thoughts and the solutions arrived at. Then I was convinced that I would not get any further solution by mere thinking. I arrived at this stage owing to the following ideas.

Once while I was engaged in thinking I suddenly got an idea that the happenings in the actual physical world, the joys and sorrows, the results of good and bad actions resembled exactly incidents seen in the dream-world. While we are in a dream, we feel the incidents to be equally real. Just as our physical body is quite detached from the pains and pleasures which we experience in a dream, similarly we are really detached from the pains and pleasures which we experience in this big dream viz. human life, which dream is the result of our ignorance of the real truth.

Just as when we become awake, all the sensations in the dream are felt to be unreal and unsubstantial, similarly when we shall awake from this big dream, we shall feel the unsubstantiality of all pains and pleasures and we shall reach the state of fearlessness. Hence the only thing that must be done is to get a knowledge of one's real self, which means awakening from this big dream, of ignorance.

When I reached this stage in my thought, I stopped all thinking about these matters and became extremely eager to obtain a knowledge of the path which would lead to this realisation. I then felt that unless I meet a Sadguru and obtain his grace, there was no other way of getting knowledge of the right path. Only God Himself in the form of a Sadguru can show it.

In March 1939 I came to know of Shri Gajanana Maharaja from Mr. Baba Satpurkar. I took his Darshan and told him the whole history of the process of my thought. He said, "I will see if my Sadguru extends his grace to you." After a few minutes, however, he told me not to be anxious as I would get the object of my desire.

I then began to visit him daily, used to sit with him for about an hour, praying to him to extend his grace to me early. Soon after this Shri Gajanana Maharaja went to Bombay for about a month. During this period I got a dream as given below.

I saw that I was sitting in front of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. We both looked at each other for a short time. A dim fog-like light appeared between him and me and I got into a trance-like state, when the appearance vanished.

After his return from Bombay on the afternoon of 6th April 1939, he initiated me by giving me the mantra, "Soham". Since then while repeating the mantra, I got certain experiences which have been given below.

On 6th April 1939, when I returned home in the evening the fragrant smell of attar was felt in my sitting room. When at night I began to repeat the Japa I felt that my whole body from the feet to the head was without the power of sensation (rigid).

On 7th April 1939, while I was sitting repeating the Japa in the afternoon, I felt my whole body losing the power of sensation and then I began to feel as light as a flower.

On 14th April 1939 when in the morning I was partly in a wakeful state, I saw before me my own form, sitting in meditation with open eyes, surrounded by a beautiful frame. That form appeared to be made of a whitish and blackish stone and was full of lustre. I was in doubt whether I was awake or dreaming and opened my eyes wide. I still saw the same form. Then I shut my eyes and lay down repeating "Soham" mentally, and still I saw the same form before me. Then I again opened my eyes and saw my lustrous form once more for the third time and then it disappeared. I mentioned the experience to Shri Gajanana Maharaja and realised the truth that what I was seeking was nothing else but myself.

On 16th April 1939, at about noon I told all the members of my family to take their meals and sat in meditation repeating the Japa. I got up after about two hours. I was then feeling a sense of great joy and my feeling of hunger

appeared to have vanished. I felt a deep calm and peace of mind. I took my meals that day very late.

Since the time I began to repeat the Japa, I do not see any visions while sitting in meditation. There is generally darkness and only sometimes a dim light is seen. My mind, however, becomes concentrated, the repeater of the mantra, the listener, and the seer become one, the body becomes motionless and there is a feeling of deep joy. I feel that the Japa of "Soham" is going on in various parts of the body viz. in the head, in the heart and in the pupils of the eyes.

Occasionally the concentration is almost complete and for some time I have no remembrance of my body. Throughout the day at present the mind is under the influence of joy and meditation. In short, although I see no visions at the time of meditation, my mind becomes concentrated, I enjoy a feeling of joy and peace through the grace of my Sadguru.

On 26th May 1939 at about 7-30 in the evening while I was sitting repeating the Japa, my body became very light and all around me there was something like the sky, I, however, cannot describe its colour. I experienced a feeling of indescribable joy while in that state. This was a peculiar experience not enjoyed before.

One day while I was asleep I got a great shock inside the back-bone which turned me sideways. (Originally I was lying on my back). I suddenly became awake and found that the Japa of "Soham" was going on of itself.

In a few months after I sit for meditation, through the grace of Guru, my mind becomes concentrated without any great effort and all other thoughts disappear. In the beginning there appears darkness which is soon succeeded by a mild light which slowly becomes more lustrous. My attention then withdraws itself from the light and fixes itself on the mantra "Soham". I feel a desire to reach the source whence this mantra proceeds. The Japa goes deeper and deeper. Some time later while I am listening to the sound of "Soham", the vibrations go deeper and deeper and then the sense of those vibrations also stops. This state, however, lasts for a very short time. A sense of great joy is felt in that state and I feel that that is my real self.

On 16th June 1939 at about 8 or 8-30 p.m. as I was standing in the gallery after I had finished my practice (meditation), I casually looked at the sky, which was quite cloudless at the time. After I had looked at the sky for about 2 or 3 minutes, I could see with open eyes a long stripe of white light.

Next day in the noon I again looked at the sky and a cloud which was then there, appeared more lustrous than usual. Since then I have got into a habit of looking at the sky. On dark nights if I fix my eye-sight steadily at the sky, long flashes of lightning are seen. The Japa of "Soham" is then automatically going on.

On 6th July 1939 in the evening I took my meals having as usual finished my Japa of "Soham". Some time later the Japa commenced of itself internally with great force, owing to which I had to keep sitting down in that state for some time. Then I wrote my daily accounts and went to bed.

As soon as I lay down on the bed the Japa again automatically began with great force and my attention was perforce attracted towards the Japa and the feeling of sleep passed away. Three or four hours passed in this manner. During this period of time, thrice I experienced such joy that it cannot be described in words. To attempt to do so would be as ridiculous as to try to describe the sweetness of sugar in words. But I shall try to describe it according to my poor knowledge by illustrations of worldly things.

(1) Just as a cold breeze suddenly produces a shivering sensation from the feet to the head, similarly a wave of joy rolled internally for about 7 or 8 seconds from the feet to the head. Or,

(2) If a grown-up man says to a child that he would show the child some fun and takes the child to a vast ocean and having firmly caught hold of the child with both hands plunges the child into the cold water and takes it out, the child feels a feeling of joy mixed with fear. I also felt like that. Just as the child has firm confidence that the grown-up man would not abandon it, similarly when this wave of joy began to move suddenly in my body, I felt a sensation of slight fear whether I would be entirely submerged and also felt a great joy and almost lost consciousness of my body. As soon as the sensation of fear commenced, I remembered my Sadguru and just as a child encircles its arms round the neck of its mother-closely, clings to her and feeling a sense of protection loses all fear similarly I got firm faith that there was no more fear for me. The Japa was going on all the while. I desired to get the experience of that joy again. Accordingly twice more I experienced that joy at intervals of some minutes.

After that I could not get sleep owing to this excessive joy. I was lying on my bed laughing as if I was tickled by somebody and a feeling of a great and pure love for my Sadguru overpowered me. I felt that just as a mother always looks after the child and the child is therefore fearless, similarly Sadguru is always near us, guarding and protecting us. This feeling of love for Sadguru produced fearlessness. I have tried to describe the feeling of the great joy which I experienced on that night by some imperfect illustrations from worldly life but the real joy which I experienced was a myriad times greater.

At about 4 a.m. on that night I got sleep and I saw the following dream :

I was sitting on a carpet in the outer hall of a big house. Maharaja was also sitting there talking with some well-to-do persons.

Some people were coming for Maharaja's Darshan and going away. Then two men of advanced age and in appearance men of position came and took their seats there. It appeared that these two men wanted to have a talk

with Maharaja. Maharaja, however, in a whim as it were, went inside the house. I too followed him inside, wishing to ask him to come outside. I saw him standing there (he was not lame at that time) and people coming one after another, taking his Darshan and going away. He was, however, looking here and there and sometimes looking at me. I also placed my head on his feet, when he caught hold of me with both hands, sat down and brought his mouth near my ear. Instead of, however, hearing any words, I felt that he sent through the aperture of my ear a wave of that extreme joy which I had previously experienced in my waking state, which wave spread through the whole of my body and I began to laugh loudly.

A month or two later, one day at night before I got asleep I was simply lying down quietly on my bed. The whole house was in darkness. I saw with my open eyes white spots of light resembling moonlight moving quietly from one side to another. Before this time I had never seen any such light in darkness. Since then whenever I fix my eyes steadily at some spot in the dark I see a ball of white light resembling moonlight, bigger than a lemon in size, and it remains steady as long as my eyes are steadily fixed there.

For the last eight or ten days, as soon as I sit for meditation I begin to see a dim light but immediately afterwards I see clear white light and the Japa continues automatically in the mind and no effort is required. I become almost absorbed in the light. The delight and concentration experienced at the time cannot be adequately described in words. While in a state of meditation a sound of snoring is occasionally heard at intervals. Persons round me might think that I am then sleeping soundly but internally I am enjoying the bliss of complete quietude of mind and am seeing the light. (28-11-39).

For the last two or three days I am getting the experiences described below during the state of meditation:-

(1) While I am seeing the light and the Japa is automatically going on, I become slowly merged in joy and then in the light forms of human beings and of other creatures are seen. These forms are made of light, emerge from the light and finally merge into the light.

(2) Every idea, thought, conception or even ordinary sound appears to have been produced from the extensive and all-pervading light and also to get merged into that light. Whatever action, whether done for some object or not, appears to take its rise from the all-pervading Power and ultimately to get merged into it. Just as whenever we place our foot it is bound to fall on the ground, similarly all actions such as walking, talking etc. are felt as if taking place in the all-pervading Brahman. (12-12-1939).

Two or three days ago I got the experience described below at the time of meditation. I saw light on all sides of me and felt that all ideas are merely moving in this light like waves on water. If I made any sound myself I heard it and also its echo. Suppose we go to a temple and are sitting there alone. If we make a sound, we hear it as well as its echo. Here the producer of the sound and its hearer are one and the same; similarly I feel that everything is

produced from the One Entity and it is also experienced by that Entity. To remain without giving rise to any sound or idea produces a sensation of great delight. As long as one remembers this One Entity as being the cause of every action, its stay and support and its ultimate goal, there is no delusion. But when one becomes completely engrossed in the action and forgets the Self, then only all trouble arises and delusion holds its sway. While doing actions when we forget that we are merely observers of the actions and identify ourselves with the actions, we are carried away from our firm position and become victims of delusion and trouble. This is what is known as Egoism.

When this fact has been dearly experienced in the light seen during meditation, remaining quiet there without any disturbing factor is what is known as "Sakshitwa" (looking upon oneself as merely the observer). If by practice one becomes absorbed in such a state, I am sure that one would go into Nirvikalpa Samadhi, where there is neither knowledge nor absence of knowledge.

Two or three days ago, as usual, after my practice of meditation and Japa was over, I went out on the terrace. It was about twelve o'clock in the noon then. There was clear sunlight and the sky was absolutely cloudless. As it was a little bit cold, I lay down on the terrace in the sunshine with my eyes directed towards the sky. It might be about a minute that I was steadily looking at the sky, when the sky, instead of appearing blue, appeared white. I continued to gaze steadily and a minute later I saw hundreds of stars moving in the sky like fish in water.

16-12-1939

(Sd.) P. L. INAMDAR.

XIV

Experiences of Mr. Vaman Keshav Mahegaonkar, Retired Teacher, Nasik.

*My meeting with my master, the conferring of His grace
and the resulting experiences.*

Being hard pressed by domestic difficulties, I became disgusted with this worldly life which is so full of misery and my mind became full of penitence. I felt that I had made no good use of my life as a human being. I had neither achieved success in the worldly life nor had I got any insight into the spiritual side of life. I then thought of devoting at least the remaining part of my life to spiritual matters and since then began to hanker after spiritual life and to try to find out a path leading to it. Through good fortune or in other words through efforts made in past births having come to fruition I got introduced to Shri Guru Gajanana Maharaja Gupte through my good friend, Mr. Vishwanath Gopal Vaidya, a retired Revenue Phadnis (Aval Karkun).

After taking his Darshan I told him the whole history of my life and expressed my keen longing for the spiritual path. Seeing my keen desire and also knowing what was passing in the innermost part of my mind he gave me assurances and asked me whether I had been favoured by any other saint. I

replied that about twenty five years ago I had received grace from Shri Narayan Maharaja of Kedgaon and since then I had been repeating the Japa of the Mantra told by him. Although I told him this, he never misled me. On the contrary he said, "I am neither a saint nor a Maharaja. As ordered by my Guru, Shri Narayan Saraswati, I tell the mantra "Soham" given to me by him to any one who comes to me. I do this in the manner of a friend. In the words of Ramdas,

"One should teach others what one knows and
make all people around one, wiser than before."

My master has allotted this work to me. Whoever comes to me with a sincere desire, I tell him this mantra, through the power of my master. I look upon all human beings as being equal. All living creatures bear a spark of the Divine Spirit and hence every human being is fitted to follow the spiritual path. I do not look upon any one as wicked or unfit to follow the spiritual path. Whoever comes to me, I tell him what I know. But it is not my custom to accept any worship, service, Dakshina or Arati as a Guru first and then to initiate that person. Nor do I mislead simple women."

He then told me the "Soham" mantra and conferred his grace upon me and asked me to repeat the Japa with firm faith. Not only this, but he for about two and a half to three months, used to make me sit near him to practise meditation. Hallowed be the name of my Master. I am very glad to say that this conferring of his grace changed the whole course of my life.

For the last twenty or twenty five years I had been meditating upon the photo of Shri Narayan Maharaja of Kedgaon and worshipping it. But I had never seen any light. It was merely a mental conception. I had never seen any other deities and there was not the slightest change in my mental tendencies. But after being initiated by Shri Guru Gajanana Maharaja and having come into contact with several of his disciples, I was deeply impressed with the wonderful individuality of Shri Gajanana Maharaja and I do not believe that this impression will ever be wiped off from my heart. This great saint would never mislead even an ordinary person, much less a real aspirant. Whatever may be a man's religion or whatever may be the duties devolving upon him he (Maharaja) does not ask him to leave them. If a person has already been favoured by any Saint and has been following the path of meditation or contemplating upon a particular deity, he urges that man to continue doing the same things only adding that he should repeat the mantra "Soham" with firm faith. He further gives the following advice in the spirit of a friend :

"My Sadguru had made me drink the nectar of Nama (name of God) and I tell you the same Nama, being ordered by my Sadguru to do so. I am practising how to go beyond Nama and am approaching the stage of perfection. If you also wish to come with me, you should repeat that Nama viz. "Soham" in your heart with firm faith. Your deep-rooted mental tendencies will vanish and the dirt of desire accumulated in previous births and in this birth will be washed away and your individual soul will be merged into the Universal Soul and you will always remain in your real original state and thus attain

everlasting peace. The advice that I give to others is not given in the capacity of a Guru, but in that of a friend. I give this advice through the inspiration of my Guru Shri Narayan Saraswati and almost in his words. I, too, am still a student and I am sure that in some birth, either this or future, I shall attain the state of perfect union with Brahman (the supreme spirit)."

In this manner Shri Gajanana Maharaja had several conversations with me regarding knowledge and humility, and then he blessed me with his grace and made me practise meditation. Since then I began to see various visions in my meditation. My favourite deity Shri Datta, my late Guru Shri Narayan Maharaja of Kedgaon and Shri Gajanana Maharaja, all these three always began to appear before me in my meditation and I worshipped them all mentally. Once I saw Shri Datta sitting on a throne, all enveloped in light. He dispelled all the doubts in my mind and said, "The one supreme Soul is dwelling in all creatures. Leave off, therefore, all sense of duality. Serve your master, who has given you the mantra "Soham", by worshipping him mentally and by praying to Him. You will thus progress quickly, attain real happiness and peace and gradually will see clearly the path leading to knowledge."

During my practice of meditation later on I saw various visions such as hills, the sea, various kinds of colours, tigers, some times dense darkness and therein flashes of lightning, sometimes blue colour and therein a bright dazzling flame etc., and my mind became calmer and calmer. I also began to experience joy and the current of thoughts began to grow less and less.

Some days later Shri Gajanana Maharaja taught me how to repeat the "Soham" Japa in coordination with breath and told me that instead of bringing before the mind's eye the form of my Guru as being in front of the sight, I should think that the form of my Guru was in my heart and mentally worship it there. I began to do so and at the time of meditation I began asking questions to my Guru for the purpose of dispelling of my doubts.

Question 1 :- Maharaja, what is the utility of these visions which I have once seen and which have since disappeared ?

Answer :- These visions which are seen by practising aspirant are a sure sign of the grace of Shri Guru. These visions later on disappear as the mind becomes one with them and the aspirant then gets the experience of joy. His desires become less and less and he can then carry on the routine of worldly life without any attachment. This does not mean that there will not be occasions of joy or sorrow in his life. Because whatever has been fixed by destiny (i.e. the accumulation of the results of the actions of all previous births) will happen but these joys and sorrows will have no effect upon his mind, which will always remain calm and steady.

Question 2:- Maharaja, some disciples cannot properly practise this Dhyana Yoga (meditation). They are not able to concentrate their minds, on account of which they are unable to see any visions. But they always wait upon their Guru and stay near him. Are they benefited in any way or not?

Answer :- If a disciple always stays near his Guru and serves him devotedly, obeys all his commands, repeats the Japa according to his directions and leads a truthful and moral life, his desires also gradually become less and less and the current of his thoughts also becomes changed. In other words he acquires patience and without being disturbed by joys or sorrows, he enjoys the happiness of peace. Even without visions, his mind becomes one with the Japa of Soham itself merely by the continuous repetition of that mantra. But then he must have got for his Guru a perfect saint who has realised the supreme soul in himself. This, however, depends upon his merit acquired in previous births. Without this high merit of previous births it is not possible to have such a combination of circumstances easily.

Question 3 :- How to recognize a Mumukshu or in other words a good disciple having such high merit of previous births ?

Answer :- He repents of his bad conduct and makes entire submission at the feet of his Guru, has a keen desire for the spiritual path and is favoured very quickly by the grace of his Guru. He quickly takes to the practice of meditation as ordered by his Guru and there is a quick and salutary change in the current of his thoughts and his relations, members of the society in which he lives, his friends and even his enemies begin to have kind and pleasant feelings towards him. When you see such characteristics in a disciple, be sure that he has acquired high merit in previous births and that he is a real Mumukshu. He might or might not see visions but he will always be absorbed in everlasting joy and will attain real peace.

Question 4 :- Is sight of visions a sure sign of real self-knowledge?

Answer :- No. Sight of visions is not the knowledge of self, but these visions are as if sign-posts on the path of knowledge leading to God. While one sees them, one comes to know that they are not the real entity. In this manner all those visions slowly disappear, in other words, they are understood to be illusive and false. Ultimately there is the realisation that all this (Universe) is nothing but Brahman and the seeker merges in the Supreme Soul. That is the real joy, that is the real peace and that is the real highest entity. Saints have said, "You have got your own thing with you but you have forgotten the place where it has been kept." This is the place where it is to be found.

Question 5:- Maharaja, I have got one more doubt. You solve many of my doubts in the form of questions and answers when I see you in Dhyana (meditation). When, however, I visit you in the physical body and when many persons are sitting round you carrying on conversation and exchange of ideas, why do you not solve my doubts there? or why is it that I do not thoroughly grasp what you say then ?

Answer :- At the time of meditation your astral body and mind become one with mine. There is also nothing external there. The mind is also steady then. Hence it becomes easier to explain things then. Explanations

given then are better understood and create a deeper impression. In our meeting in the physical world this oneness cannot be achieved and there are also many other external things. Besides the language used when we meet in the physical world is always mysterious and metaphorical and difficult to understand and it is not advisable to explain things more clearly.

Once Shri Datta asked me whether I had understood the meaning of "Soham". According to my understanding and as inspired by my Sadguru I replied "So means He, i.e. God and Soham means I. Hence "Soham" means, God is myself". Hearing this reply Shri Datta nodded His head in approval but asked me again whether I knew any other meaning of that Mantra. I, however, could not answer this question. Then Shri Datta told me with His own lips that "So" meant taking in of the breath and "Ham" meant letting out of the breath. Hence, He said, "Soham" meant taking in and letting out. What is to be taken in and what is to be let out? The answer to that is that bad qualities, the six passions, egotism etc., are to be let out and then good qualities that is, good morals, faith in truth, devotion to God and Guru are to be taken in. First of all bad qualities are to be let out and then good qualities are to be taken in. "Soham" can be interpreted in this manner also.

Question 6 :- Maharaja, you have explained what is meant by turning inwards. But what is the difference between external sight and internal sight?

Answer :- At the time of meditation you see various visions in the external sky which is in front of your eyesight. All these visions should be made to disappear and you should steadily fix in your heart only the form of your Guru and should mentally worship it there. Owing to this the mind becomes steady there which is not the case with the visions seen in the external sky. This is itself known as internal sight or turning inwards. The Great Lord Shri Krishna also has told Uddhava similarly on this point. Sadguru is the real God. You should see him in the lotus of your heart in the interior of a brilliant flame and having fixed your mind steadily there, you should meditate.

I have here given a brief summary of my experiences in Dhyana Yoga (meditation) to the best of my abilities. This is also an inspiration of the favour of my Guru.

Astranchi Vesa,
House No. 2264.
18-8-1938

(Sd.) VAMAN KESHAV MAHEGAONKAR,
Retired Teacher, Nasik.

XV

Experiences of Mr. Vasanta Narayan Nirokhekar,
Police Training School, Nasik.

My uncle, Mr. D. L. Nirokhekar, was often going to Shri Gajanana Maharaja since the Diwali of 1938. I accompanied him to the house of

Maharaja on 15th March 1939, and got the Darshana of Maharaja for the first time. I had a desire that Maharaja should take compassion on me and shower his grace upon me. My uncle introduced me to him but Maharaja did not say anything to me on that day. I, therefore, went to him next day alone in the afternoon. He ordered me to repeat the mantra,

“Shri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama” and to see what happens. That same night I saw the image of Shri Panduranga of great lustre and felt a sense of great joy.

On 13th April 1939 Maharaja told me to repeat simply “Soham” and said that by daily practice, within a period of about six months I would get peace, happiness and joy. I began to repeat the Japa for about two hours daily. In course of some days, I got the following experiences :-

- (1) Once there was a fluttering sound near both the ears.
- (2) I felt some thing going up from the waist through the back-bone.
- (3) I felt a whirling motion in the intestines.
- (4) The portion of the body from the stomach upto the head became rigid like a stone and I became terrified.

Since Thursday, 11th May 1939, my mind became more concentrated and I began to feel that the Japa was going deeper and deeper inside.

On Friday, 12th May 1939, I was repeating the Japa while lying down on the bed. I felt that coils of something round my waist were being uncoiled and a bright spark appeared before the eyes and I experienced a feeling of great joy.

On 25th May 1939, I had been to Maharaja for Darshan. After returning home I was repeating the Japa with my eyes shut, when I heard the following words, “Your mind and eyes will be delighted.”

On Sunday 27th May 1939, while I was repeating the Japa, a sound like that of low whistling proceeded from my navel and went up towards the head and for one or two seconds I saw “Kundalini”. I felt a sense of deep joy at the time.

I got these experiences during the space of only a month and a half. I only pray to the feet of Shri Sadguru that my progress in this path may continue through his grace and that I may enjoy real bliss.

For the last more than a month, a sound of bells and a sound like that of a water-fall are continuously being heard in the ears and hence I feel great joy and get myself absorbed in them.

Police Training School,
Nasik.
5th August 1939.

(Sd.)VASANT N. NIROKHEKAR

Spiritual experiences of Mr. Govind Eknath Ekbote,
Forest Ranger, as narrated by his guide and
friend Mr. Talwalkar.

Mr. Ekbote is my friend and is serving in the forest department as a Ranger. About two years ago his mind became troubled by worldly difficulties and leaned towards spiritual matters and he began to make efforts in that direction such as Japa, reciting of hymns, not taking food, etc. Mr. Valawalkar came to know about this and advised him to go to Shri Gajanana Maharaja. When I learnt this, I myself took Mr. Ekbote to Gajanana Maharaja as I had gone to him once or twice before that time. Shri Gajanana Maharaja listened to the history of the various efforts made by Mr. Ekbote and gave a short description of the path of Yoga and of the mantra "Soham". He said that Mr. Ekbote's efforts were directed towards purification of the mind. It would take a long time and it was not of very great importance in the path of Yoga, if directed by a Sadguru. It did not matter if one followed the path of Yoga at once being initiated in it by a Sadguru.

As we did not agree with this idea, we came away in a disappointed mood. I then gave the four volumes of Shri Ramatirtha's works to Mr. Ekbote and encouraged him to carry on his efforts according to his light, keeping firm faith in God. He did accordingly and he is carrying on his efforts upto this time. There was, however, very quick progress from the time he met Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Whenever he used to be conscious of definite progress, or whenever he had any doubt or whenever any question troubled his mind, he used to write to me and I used to send replies to him according to the best of my knowledge and encourage him in his efforts. I myself am not a learned man, nor am I a Yogi. Still somehow or other my letters gave satisfaction to Mr. Ekbote and at present he has progressed so far that he can easily contemplate the Nirguna Brahma. He becomes entirely absorbed and anyone who would look at him in that blissful state would be convinced of his internal high progress. When I met him about two months ago and observed his condition, I was greatly wonderstruck and found that his progress was entirely beyond my comprehension. The same could be said regarding some of his spiritual experiences narrated by him in his letters to me just prior to our meeting. I mentioned this to Mr. Valawalkar, who suggested that it must be the result of the grace bestowed by Shri Gajanana Maharaja during Mr. Ekbote's first visit to him.

I used to write letters to Mr. Ekbote according to my ideas. It was to be expected, therefore, that their effect upon me should have been equal to or even more than upon Mr. Ekbote. But I find that I am where I was. It is quite true that Mr. Ekbote is a man of great intensity of feeling and of devotion and I am lost in wonder to see that Mr. Ekbote gives the credit of his progress on the path of Yoga to me who am absolutely an ignoramus in the matter.

I, therefore, gave consideration to the suggestion of Mr. Valawalkar and also referred the matter to Shri Gajanana Maharaja. He said, "If a person has great intensity of feeling and devotion ; and is also putting up tremendous efforts, Sadguru many a time leads him on the Yoga path through the agency of another in whom that person has faith. That other person may not be conscious of it." After some consideration I also began to perceive the truth of this. Otherwise how could it be explained that a disciple should be an adept while his Guru should be an ignoramus? It appears now clear that the grace bestowed by Shri Gajanana Maharaja upon Mr. Ekbote at the time of his first visit must have been bearing fruit and my idea that his progress was due to the instructions given in my letters was absolutely wrong.

Still I must say that Maharaja had not brought this fact to my notice before this time. I had several times discussed question about Mr. Ekbote's progress with him and every time he had particularly urged me that I should continue the correspondence with Mr. Ekbote. I had several times shown Mr. Ekbote's letters to Maharaja and he had on all those occasions encouraged me and urged me to carry on the correspondence and help Mr. Ekbote in his progress. Sometimes Maharaja said in a joking manner, You are I and I am you. You are yourself Omkar. I am myself doing this through you." I thought it was all a joke. As I was trying to help Mr. Ekbote with heart-felt sincerity, I thought that the whole credit of his progress must go to me.

But the letters which I received from Mr. Ekbote after he achieved success in the contemplation of Nirguna Brahma and the description which he gave to me regarding the experience of extraordinary bliss when we met about two months ago, gave a rude shock to my feeling of self-complacency and I thought that I was really a bankrupt. I had upto this time given no thought to the words jokingly uttered by Maharaja, to the instruction which he had imparted during our first visit and which was slightly treated by both of us, to Maharaja's often times encouraging me to carry on the correspondence and to the accumulated result of all these things. The discussion with Maharaja the other day threw a clear light over all these things and then I could see the real reason of my bankruptcy. The correspondence was only the external (outward) cause of Mr. Ekbote's progress, the real cause being the power of Maharaja exercised through me. This fact was admitted by Maharaja then. He also referred to his words uttered in joke (mentioned above).

Maharaja is not willing to shake Mr. Ekbote's faith in me. It is out of question that Mr. Ekbote will lose his faith in me. I have, therefore, to act the part of a medium between Maharaja and Mr. Ekbote. There is, however, no doubt that this instance of Mr. Ekbote would be considered quite unique in the history of spiritual aspirants.

XVII

Experiences of Mr. Bhargava Vaman Parchure,
Retired Police Head Constable, Nasik.

I am originally a resident of Murud in Dapoli Taluka of Ratnagiri District. Owing to the death of my father when I was very young, my education in Marathi was not completed. I then came to Nasik and having served in the Police for 21 years I retired in 1935.

Some months before my retirement, I had been to Purkar's Wada near Nava Darwaja in connection with the investigation of an offence. I there came to know that one Gajanana Maharaja stayed there. But when I actually saw him my common sense could not let me think that he was a saint or a Maharaja. One Mr. Appasaheb Walawalkar who was serving in the Forest Department stayed in a house near the one where I was stopping and he used often to talk about Shri Gajanana Maharaja to me. So when I retired I requested Mr. Walawalkar to take me to Gajanan Maharaja and introduce me to him. After my introduction I began going for his Darshan daily in the morning and in the evening. Seven or eight days passed and on one Thursday at about 4 p.m. he conferred his grace upon me by ordering me to repeat the mantra "Soham". He gave me directions to repeat it 5000 times for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening every day, with a rosary in my hand and with my eye-sight turned inwards.

Accordingly I commenced doing so and experienced a great calmness of mind while doing so. After two days had elapsed thus I was ordered to repeat the mantra without using the rosary. Two or three days later, while I was sitting repeating the mantra I felt that my body had grown very heavy. A few minutes later the heaviness passed away and its place was taken by lightness to such an extent that I thought I would be blown away by a breeze like the peelings of the skin of an onion. Some time later I regained the ordinary condition of the body but felt some disturbance in the belly near the navel region. Without giving way to fear I continued sitting repeating the mantra, when my whole body began to perspire and the normal respiratory process stopped, but I felt that internally respiration was going on from the naval region to the head. (Maharaja later on explained that this showed that the nerve sushumna was opened and the breath was moving through it). I saw before my internal sight a burning furnace, square in size, from which flames were coming out. I saw a serpent-like shape, bright and shining like molten gold, coming out of the flames and going up towards my chest. Then I was sure that it was a serpent. Instead of, however, feeling any sensation of fear, I experienced a feeling of joy. When the snake reached the heart and sat there coiling itself, a sensation of fear began to creep over me but with fortitude I began to repeat "Soham" loudly and brought to my mind Gajanana Maharaja and remained thus for some time.

Then the snake moved from that place and coiled itself at the centre between the eye-brows. I then felt a great joy and then I regained ordinary consciousness. I narrated this experience to Gajanana Maharaja the same evening. He said that this showed that the Kundalini had been awakened and that it was not necessary now to sit repeating the mantra for hours together. I should sit wherever inclined to do so and enjoy the feeling of joy.

But I began to repeat the mantra with greater earnestness and saw snakes red, black, yellow and white in colour, some having one mouth, some five and some nine mouths. Similarly I got the Darshan of various deities.

On one occasion while I was repeating the Japa in an absorbed state of mind I saw several doors opened near the navel lotus and in a short time I saw the yellow coloured bright and shining Sudarshan wheel whirling round there and four other shining wheels coming out of it and moving round and round. The form of Shri Krishna having four arms appeared there and after a short time the whole scene disappeared. In its place appeared four beautiful young ladies who asked me to marry them. I told them that I was already married and that if they would disturb me in my Japa I would inform my Sadguru about it. Upon this they disappeared, and while I continued my Japa, I heard a voice coming up from the navel lotus, "Ask whatever you want". I then prayed that in birth after birth I should get an opportunity of serving my master Shri Gajanana Maharaja, that I wanted him as my master and nothing else. As, however, I was living in the world, I must get food to eat and clothes to wear and I wanted to serve the feet of God. To this prayer I received the reply, "Let it be so." And then I came back to ordinary consciousness. I narrated this experience to Shri Gajanana Maharaja.

On another occasion while I was repeating the Japa I got absorbed in it and I saw that I was standing in the Milky Ocean. Then a lotus stalk with a lotus leaf upon it came upwards from the bottom and appeared upon the surface of the ocean and upon the leaf was a shining child's form, blue in colour, of the size of a man's thumb. The child was looking at me with a smile and I was observing it with great joy and standing before it with folded hands. While this vision was before me tears of joy were flowing from my eyes. When I came back to ordinary consciousness I found that the portion of my shirt which covered my belly and the folds of the dhotar I was wearing were wet.

One day at about 9 or 10 a.m. while I was returning home after taking the darshan of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, I saw a big orb of light which immediately disappeared. Within a month or two from the time that I was favoured with the grace of my master, I began to see at various times big or small orbs of light, which caused a sensation of great joy.

On one occasion while I was repeating the Japa, I saw the moon-like light of fireworks (Chandrajyota) in my brain. Then a big snake with an orb on its head appeared and on that ball or orb appeared land, the sea, rivers, mountains, forests, wild and cruel beasts, big buildings, ships on the sea, mills, railway trains and other things which are ordinarily to be seen in various parts of the earth.

When I narrated this experience to Shri Gajanana Maharaja, he said that the vision was meant to convince me regarding the truth of what has been described in the Shastras, viz., that the earth is borne on the head of the Shesha. The great joy that I felt owing to this vision lasted for several days and even after that whenever I brought that vision to my recollection, I used to feel waves of joy coursing through my mind.

On another occasion, during the Japa, I saw a celestial light coming through the doors as it were being opened, between the eye-brows, just as the light of the sun enters a room through the doors of the windows being opened. In that light I saw Lakshmi standing on a lotus. This scene disappeared and I saw a ball of light between the eye-brows and there appeared a lustrous eye (different from our ordinary eyes), which, later on, Maharaja said was the eye of knowledge. Through this eye I used to see various visions for many days while I was sitting repeating the Japa and experienced great joy.

Only in a few days after I was favoured with the grace of my master, I began to feel the smell of fragrant flowers proceeding from my navel region, owing to which the mind always felt refreshed. So also whenever I bring before my mind Shri Gajanana Maharaja, whether he be there in Nasik or not, I experience the smell of scented sticks, incense, etc., and I feel as if I get his Darshan in that form.

On one occasion I committed some mistake while repeating the Japa. Maharaja appeared before me and gave a forcible slap on my thigh and brought me to the right path. Even when I came back to ordinary consciousness, I felt the aching sensation on my thigh. From this experience I am led to think that our Sadguru is always near us when we are repeating the Japa, discharging his responsibilities regarding us.

Once while I was travelling by the Nagpur Mail from Bombay to Nasik, although there was the rattling sound of the train, a sound like the tinkling of a small bell began to be heard in my head. This happened a year or a year and a half after I was initiated. At present many sounds of various kinds are heard by me and I get absorbed in them on many occasions. I am not perturbed by worldly difficulties. I have a feeling that I have to discharge certain duties through this mortal body and my peace of mind is never in the least disturbed.

(Sd.) BHARGAVA WAMAN PARCHURE.

XVIII

Experiences of Mr. Dattatraya Shankar Sakrikar,
Nandgaon, District Nasik.

I first saw Shri Gajanana Maharaja at Nandgaon in 1928. In that year he might have come there after that once or twice. But I had no talk with him. I used simply to sit as an observer or spectator. I had a fixed idea in my mind that I would acknowledge that person only as my Sadguru, who would recognise me and mention the path which I had been following upto that time.

On the third or the fourth visit, when I was alone with Maharaja, he began to talk with me and then he described the path I was following and also the degree of my progress. A day or two later, when some people, Mr. Saswadkar and others, were there Maharaja introduced me to them and tried

to show them how far I had progressed. He ordered one packet of cigarettes to be opened and gave one cigarette to each of the persons assembled there. He ordered me to light my cigarette and to smoke it, side by side to carry on meditation (practice) according to my path. The whole building became full of the sweet smell of different flowers and people began to collect from all parts of it.

He next pointed out to me the path of Ganapati Darshana by making me sit near him and placed his hand on my head. I, however, owing to some circumstances, could not follow it up.

One day Maharaja was sitting quietly without talking. He got a profuse perspiration, as it were, and all his clothes became wet. One or two days after this incident a letter was received from somewhere, containing the information that some person while about to be drowned in the sea had been saved by meditating upon Maharaja. I do not now remember whose letter it was nor from what place it had been sent.

28-1-37.

(Sd.) DATTATRAYA SHANKAR SAKRIKAR.

XIX

Extracts from two Letters written from Rohe, District Kolaba
by Mr. Bhau Saheb Raje to Shri Gajanana
Maharaja, at Parel, Bombay.

(1)

Rohe, 10-8-1923

I was very glad to read your letter. I read it again and was again greatly delighted. Who, except a saint, will ever remember a poor (sinner) like me? Even God does not remember such a person, then why talk of others? Only saints do so.

I have given above some verses from Janneshwari and also the reasons why I do not understand them. I have been carrying on the practice of meditation but it is not as fruitful as it should be. The cup of nectar comes very near my lips but some obstacle intervenes and it recedes. But it is quite true that it is quite near my lips. The marriage (union) was about to be celebrated four times but owing to want of mental courage, the intervening curtain disappeared. The whole body appears to be drawn upwards, the limbs become loose and lifeless and the breath goes up. Once I had become absolutely unconscious of the body. A dark blue curtain was at the time being

seen before the inner sight. But as the main thing could not be seen in the curtain the whole thing became tasteless like food without salt. This happened three months ago. Since then the scene has not been repeated. On the contrary a series of troubles has begun which has deprived the mind of all peace.

For the last nearly three quarters of a month, sickness has established itself in my house. Every person in the house is suffering from fever and four or five times the doctor had to pay visits. The sickness appears to be slightly lessening from today. I alone am all right. I know that unless my Sadguru wills it, my desire will not be fulfilled. I, however, have not left off efforts and will never leave them off.

I saw with my own eyes the forms of Kama (desire or love or passion), Krodha (anger), Idleness, Evil tendency, Madana (sexual passion) but their faces have been blackened. Blue and reddish-yellow colours also have almost ceased to appear. Once there was horripilation over the whole of my body. A garland was thrown round my neck but I could not get the Darshan of the bridegroom. Hence restlessness has not gone away and I feel as if the marriage itself has not been celebrated. I am waiting for it with impatience.

I feel as if I am about to have my wish fulfilled but suddenly fear arises and I again come to consciousness. Please let me know if there is any remedy for this.

To support the whole family on merely the emoluments of service, to face the various difficulties in worldly life and still to enjoy the great joy of the sight of God, appears to be well-nigh impossible to be achieved by an unfortunate person like me. Still putting my faith in the proverb that a man's destiny is always covered over and unrevealed, I have been carrying on my practice. Of course, I would not be surprised, if I do not achieve success.

I, too, have a great desire to see you. But I am helpless. If Sadguru wills, we shall meet. As you are lame I do not make myself bold to invite you here, although I had a great desire to do so.

Through your grace we are doing well.

Your humble servant,
(Sd.) BHAU RAJE.

(2)

Rohe, 31-10-1923.

After having saluted your feet with great love and modesty, I prefer the following request, for which, I hope, you will not be angry with me.

The Vedas assumed silence but utterance was given by saints to the hidden secrets (being inspired by the Vedas) and owing to this the Vedas were really beautified. A merely white or a merely black colour does not give delight to the eyes but black on white or white on black gladdens the eye. If

Brahman had not been associated with Maya, there would have been no perception of joy and nobody could have experienced it. Because Brahman got the touch of Maya, therefore It obtained grace and beauty and incarnated itself as Rama, Krishna, saints or mahants. I am also doing the same to you. I am making you out as Brahman touched with Maya and thus beautifying you. Why are you then wiping off the effect by saying, "I am ignorant, I am a cripple etcetera?" I really cannot understand this. If one mixes sugar with sugar the real taste of sugar is not tasted but it is tasted only when sugar is mixed with milk. If the Sun pretends that he is blind, that is, without light, the only refutation of it lies in the activities of the world, which are carried on in the Sun's light. I have got proofs with me of your real internal light, then why should you pretend to be without light? And how am I expected to allow such a statement to go unchallenged? A cobra may move in a zigzag manner after it leaves its hole but while entering the hole it has to go straight.

The great joy that I experienced in reading your letter cannot be described in words. Silence is the only eloquent expression of it. My duties as a Government Servant are at present very onerous and I am not satisfied if I have to write a very short letter to you. I have, therefore, to wait until I get leisure enough to write a long letter. I am hence rather late in sending this reply to your letter, which I read very carefully twice. There appears to be some little difference between what you say and what Shri Jnaneshwar Maharaja says in Jnaneshwari.

The difference appears to be regarding Pranayama (breath control). Jnaneshwari does not refer to "Rechaka" (emitting breath), "Pooraka" (taking in of breath) etc. It only refers to certain Yogis who make the Prana merge in Apana and Apana merge in Prana. There is also a difficulty regarding the meaning of Nasikagra. Ordinarily it means the tip of the nose. But Shri Jnaneshwar says somewhere that the sight should be fixed naturally on the base of the nose and if one can get into a state of concentration there, one can see one's self. I, therefore, request you to make the point clear as to where the sight is to be fixed. I have submitted this question to you as you have got real experience of this.

The second question is regarding what is known as Hridaya Ordinary people consider it to be the heart situated in the chest., But "Kapila Gita" says something else.

The space from the throat to the eye-brows is considered as the seat of Vayu (air). There is a lotus of sixteen petals at the base of the palate. All the sixteen vowels are placed on the sixteen-petals. Above that there is the Heart-Lotus which is very minute and it shines in the eyes. This shows that the real seat of the Hridaya as understood in Yoga is in the eyes and not in the chest as understood by ordinary people. You should kindly let me know your views so that I might understand the point clearly.

Further, Jnaneshwari does not say anything about getting into absorption by shutting the eyes. On the contrary it says that the eyes should be kept open and in that state one should get into absorption. Please let me

know which is the proper course to be followed. I should like also the following point to be cleared up regarding the fixing of the eyesight between the eye-brows. Does it mean that the pupils of the eyes should be taken upwards and that spot (between the eye-brows) should be seen or does it mean that the eyes are to be kept as they are and only the mind is to be fixed there? In your next letter kindly elucidate the above-mentioned four points.

I mentioned my spiritual progress to the Fakirsaheb at Uran. While listening to me he appeared to be greatly delighted. He asked me as to who had initiated me into this secret. I then told him about you. The Fakirsaheb was talking in fluent English which was interpreted to me by my eldest son in Marathi. He told me that henceforward I should practise only for a short time every day and said that he would again meet me accidentally in December. He has warned me that henceforward if I carry on the practice without the aid and guidance of a person who knows, I would either die or become mad.

The Fakirsaheb is about thirty years old and the lustre on his body is worth seeing. But the most remarkable thing about him is that his speech is very quiet, sweet, and full of grace and modesty and has a great power of attracting others. His eyes are full of brilliance and there is a peculiar charm in the casting of his glance. He has very few wants. He only requires half a cup of cold tea after about every quarter of an hour and a cigarette to smoke almost continuously. He does not care for anything else. If anyone gives him anything, he throws it away. Only he accepts things if he himself asked some one to bring them. He does not require any clothes and he generally stops in a Darga near the sea-shore, beyond Pirwadi. Last year this Fakirsaheb used to remain concealed in the latrines naked with a blanket rolled round his body. Now-a-days he appears to be humanised.

My first meeting with him happened one evening in the house of a rich Mohammedan, through my son-in-law Mr. Nadkar, who stays at Uran. Next morning the Fakirsaheb went to Pirwadi and we followed him. I then asked him certain questions, which I had previously asked to Jivanmukta Maharaja of Uran, but which had not been satisfactorily answered by him. The questions were :-

What is the difference between "Atma-rupa" and "Atma-swarupa"? What is the meaning of "Atma" and of "Swa"? Do not these two words contain the true meaning of "Tat twam asi" (Thou art That)? If they do, then in what way? If not, why not? How does the body support the body and the breath support breath? Which are the three "Mantras" and which is the "Ardha bimba"? What is meant by "Lagna"? What is the state of the Sadhaka at that time?

I had asked these questions to Jivanmnkta Maharaja but he could not answer them satisfactorily and ultimately admitted that he knew nothing of the matter. I remained at Uran for two days more as desired by Mr. Nadkar as Fakirsaheb had gone to Bombay. When I met him as described above he gave me answers which thoroughly satisfied me. I narrated to him my following experiences :-

(1) The body internally moves up and down and I feel as if I am floating. The Fakirsaheb began to laugh at this.

(2) Blue colours appear before the eyes, mingled sometimes with reddish yellow colours. He continued to laugh.

(3) The body becomes rigid like a pillar and then extremely, slack and there is a feeling of fear. He began to laugh more.

(4) If I lie down motionless, suddenly there appears at the centre of the eye-brows a thin plate clear like glass and then disappears and immediately a form like my own appears for a moment and then suddenly disappears. The Fakirsaheb began to laugh more and more and was saying "That's right, that's right."

(5) Once at noon after having taken my meals I was smoking a bidi when I saw an orb of the size of a lota shining like the sun in front of me at a height of about six or seven cubits. I was looking at it with my eyes open but with diffidence as my mind was afraid. The orb remained where it was and did not move away. I, therefore, went inside, unrolled my bed and lay down with my eyes shut. I do not know when the orb disappeared.

The following is my usual routine at present. After getting up in the morning, answering the call of nature, and washing the mouth, I perform the "Kakad Arati" (the turning round of the ghee-lamp, which is performed early in the morning) and then meditate upon the house-hold gods. In a short time, the whole Devhara (the wooden seat for the Gods) disappears. I then stop meditation without going further as I am afraid. Then I practise Pranayama. I have lessened this practice since I returned from Uran. The Fakirsaheb has not told me to stop the practice altogether but he asked me to practise less. The whole day and even at night until I fall asleep I feel as if I am floating. I have, therefore, settled not to practise further unless I have some one near me, who is an adept in this, to help me. I also sit for meditation thrice daily. At night I read Jnaneshwari. I also repeat the Japa.

The Fakirsaheb says that as soon as the curtain of fear is removed, I shall meet my real Self and be united with it. I am very near it. But he has warned me not to proceed alone without somebody's help. Please let me know your opinion, and write in detail regarding whether my experiences are or are not on the proper path, how distant the goal is, whether I am nearing it or it is still far away. I am anxiously waiting for your reply. I am entirely depending upon you. Of course I realise that my progress will be difficult owing to my desire to succeed in spiritual as well as worldly matters.

Please communicate to me if there is any easy way to obtain both these objects. If I leave off worldly matters, the burden of looking to the needs of my family would have to be thrown on God and it would be giving Him trouble. I, therefore, think that it is better to proceed as I am doing at present.

Hence I want you to show me an easy path. As I cannot get leave and also have no spare cash, I cannot afford to go to see you and have therefore to check my desire. My Karma is all powerful .and there is no remedy for it.

If God wills, we shall meet.

Your humble servant,
(Sd.) BHAU RAJE.

XX

Experiences of Mr. Shankar Malhar Sant,
Petition Writer, Nasik.

I suffered many troubles in this worldly life and my mind became absolutely restless. I then visited many saints and mahatmas and received their blessings. The result was that I began to entertain a keen longing for spiritual knowledge and a firm faith in its efficacy.

While I was in this state of mind somebody told me that Shri Gajanana Maharaja was coming to Nasik in a day or two and that I should take his Darshan and receive initiation from him. I was greatly delighted at this and I passed the two days in anxious eagerness. When he arrived I went to his Darshan with my mind full of eager longing. He asked me several questions and conversed with me for some time. The conversation is briefly given below:-

At that time, Messrs. Bhave, Vaidya, Mahegaonkar teacher and others were sitting near Maharaja. Mr. Bhave was talking about Vedanta.

Myself:- Please initiate me and make me blessed.

Maharaja :- Who told you that I am a Maharaja ?

Myself:- I came to know about you about 6 or 7 days ago. I became anxious to see you and hence I have come now. I was also greatly delighted to read "Guru Shishya Vijnana Dipika", which, concerns you.

Maharaja :- What works have you read ?

Myself:- I have read Jnaneshwari and a part of Dasabodh.

Maharaja :- How long are you staying at Nasik ?

Myself:- I am staying here for the last 17 or 18 years.

Maharaja :- Have you been initiated by any saint ?

Myself:- I received initiation from Shri Yeshwantrao Maharaja otherwise known as Deva Mamlatdar, about 30 or 35 years ago. I have not as yet attained peace of mind. I am at present about 80 years old, I have no worldly ambition; still for maintaining myself and family I am even now writing petitions in the Court.

Maharaja :- Baba, I am like your son. I am not worthy to bless you. I might mislead you. I am myself a student still and not an adept.

Mr. Bhavé then said to me, "Baba, Shri Gajanan Maharaja is a Kayastha by caste. Have you thought about this ?"

I laughed at this and said that a Brahmanishtha (one who has become one with Brahman i.e. the Supreme Soul) has really no caste.

Maharaja :- How do you know that I am a Brahmanishtha ?

Myself:- I am practising meditation etc. for the last 30 years. I bring before my mind's eye the form of Shri Yeshwantrao Maharaja as being in my heart. Still I have not attained peace and the mind is as restless as ever.

Maharaja :- Was not Deva Mamlatdar a saint who had realised Self? My Guru and Deva Mamlatdar are really one and both of us are their disciples. Then how can you be benefited by me?

Myself:- I have come to you being guided by him (Deva Mamlatdar) and hence I have faith in you. Besides as soon as I bowed down to your feet, I felt a great calmness and felt as if I met a long-lost acquaintance. I, therefore, firmly believe that you can benefit me.

Maharaja :- I am not a saint who has realised Self. I have got certain experiences by the practice of meditation and Japa. I shall give you certain directions through my Guru's grace, which you should follow and see what happens. If you are not benefited, you may leave off.

Maharaja then asked me to go to him on a Thursday. I went there and placed a garland of flowers on the portrait of Maharaja's Guru and distributed sweetmeats as Prasad. Maharaja then made me sit down, placed his hand on my head and told me to repeat the Japa of "Soham". I immediately went into a trance-like state in which the Japa of "Soham" was going on. For forty minutes I did not return to ordinary consciousness and experienced a great joy.

On Sunday, Ashadha Vadya 12, at about 10 or 10-30 a.m. I went to Maharaja and placed my head on his feet and prayed to him to bless me. He held me close to him and whispered in my ear the Mantra (Soham) and made me repeat it and placed his hand on my head and ordered me to carry on practice. I have been doing it since then. I briefly narrate below my experiences :-

The letters of the mantra were clearly seen in the Pashyanti and later on the same letters could be seen on the forehead near the eyebrows.

The knowable objects became absorbed in the knower and then the knower also disappeared. In that state where there was absence of both the knower and the knowable, there was the basis of the mantra given by Guru. This fact was definitely known by me.

I came to know the original source from which thought springs. Soham became fixed there and thought was as it were put in restraint and could not rise up. If at all a thought sprung up, it took the form of Soham. All restlessness vanished and peace began to reign and the sight began to seek the source whence Soham proceeded. Through the grace of Sadguru I easily got the solution of the problem of how we are one with the universe. Although there may be different bodies, still the elementary principles in them are in me and the elementary principles in me are in them. This fact being completely grasped, the feeling of duality which formerly existed between myself and the different bodies, is now slowly disappearing.

A proof of this lies in the desire to bow to any one, great or small, with a feeling of oneness with him. I am conscious that my egoism and feelings of dislike or hatred of individuals are fast disappearing.

I am at present trying to get experience of that state which lies between the rise of the mantra Soham and its disappearance. Further experiences in this state would be beyond description.

All these experiences I got in one month and two days i.e. from Ashadha Vadya 12 to Shravana Vadya 14 of the Shaka Year 1860.

Dedicated to the feet of Sadguru Gajanana Maharaja.

24th August 1938.

Wednesday,

Shravana Vadya 14.

(Sd.) SHANKAR MALHAR SANT.

After I got initiation at the hands of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, I had conversations with him, in Dhyana in which I asked him various questions and he answered them. I give below these questions asked by me to him as a disciple and the answers given by Shri Gajanana Maharaja as Guru.

Disciple :- Who am I? Whence have I come and whither am I going?

Guru :- You are beyond the three states viz., waking, dreaming and sleeping. You are the Seer of these states. You may become manifest out of the One Entity and afterwards you will again be merged in the Unmanifested One Entity.

Disciple :- What is the meaning of "Manifested" and "Un-manifested" ?

Guru :- “Manifested” means “what can be seen and understood” while “Unmanifested” means “what cannot be seen or perceived”.

Disciple :- Please describe to me the “Unmanifested”.

Guru :- It is void of attributes, it has no form, it has no birth and no death and it is without thought or ideas.

Disciple :- Whence do all mundane things take their birth and in what do they live and in what do they merge in the end ?

Guru :- All things take their birth from, have their being in and in the end merge into the “ Source “ of all.

Disciple :- What is to be understood by the “Source “ ?

Guru :- Brahman (devoid- of name and form).

Disciple :- Brahman being void of attributes and formless, how were all things produced or created ? What was the cause ?

Guru :- A thought that there should be the apparent appearance of the world (Vivarta Sankalpa).

Disciple:- What was produced from that thought ?

Guru :- Om was produced with its three divisions of “Akara”, “Ukara”, and “Makara” representing the three attributes of “Sattwa”, “Rajas”, and “Tamas”.

Disciple :- Are these three attributes in equal proportions? When they are in equal proportions, what are they called?

Guru :- When they are equal, they are called Pradhana.

Disciple :- What is the meaning of “Mahattattwa” (the great principle) ?

Guru :- That knowledge which manifests itself in the capacity of activity of the “Pradhana” is known as Mahattattwa.

Disciple :- When originally there was nothing, what was the throbbing of the idea ?

Guru :- That I am Brahman.

Disciple :- Where was this throbbing or vibration produced ?

Guru :- On the Para speech, which is the source of the four kinds of Speech and of the ego.

Disciple :- How does the ego dwell in the body ?

Guru :- There is the conception "I am one having a body".

Disciple :- When the ego and the body dwell together, what is the combination called ?

Guru :- It is called Jiva or the Individual Soul.

Disciple :- What are the different kinds of Jivas and what are they called ?

Guru :- Chiefly of three kinds : (1) Spiritual, (2) Worldly (i.e. absorbed in worldly life) ; and (3) Chidabhasa i.e. that in which the life principle is perceived. The reflection of the supreme Soul in the intellect is known as Jiva.

Disciple :- Out of these three which Jiva can get experience?

Guru :- The Spiritual or the Real.

Disciple :- In what way does the spiritual or real Jiva get experience ?

Guru :- Although it is in the body, it is beyond the three states viz. (1) Waking, (2) Dreaming and (3) Sleeping and hence it is the real Soul or Supreme Soul.

Disciple :- When and where can this Self be experienced ?

Guru :- At the time when there is the end of the waking state and there is the beginning of the sleeping state or when the sleeping state ends and the waking state begins to rise - in the interval between these two states.

Disciple :- Can one get experience of Self in the sleeping state ?

Guru :- As the ego is dormant in the sleeping state, instead of experience there is only ignorance.

Disciple :- Are the individual and Supreme souls one or different ?

Guru :- They are one. They are not different.

Disciple:- Then why is the One absolutely free and the other dependent ?

Guru :- That soul which has a desire to enjoy is dependent and that Soul which has no such desire is free and it is really God.

Disciple :- The source of both these souls being one and that one being without name and form, how were these both souls produced ?

Guru :- The reflection of the Supreme Soul in Maya is known as Ishwara (God) and is free, without any desire and hence self dependent.

Disciple :- Does the Jiva get experience of Self while in a state of ignorance? If Jiva gets this experience then in what way? I wish to know this as it would serve as a means of salvation to the ignorant.

Guru :- Really speaking the Jiva gets the experience of Self every moment even in the state of ignorance but owing to ignorance, the Jiva is not able to realise it. I shall give you some idea about it. When we see with our eyes, what gets the true knowledge of the thing seen is the Self. We hear various sounds by our ears, which we recognise as sweet or unpleasant or when we eat we understand the taste, salt, sour or pungent; the real Entity which perceives these things is our Self. But owing to the covering of ignorance we cannot realise this Self.

Disciple :- What is this covering ?

Guru :- It is just like a curtain.

Disciple :- What are the chief means of removing this covering ?

Guru :- The three-fold perception.

Disciple :- Please explain the meaning of this three-fold perception.

Guru :- First is the perception through the Shastras, then through one's Self and then through Guru.

Disciple :- Please make the point clear.

Guru :- "All this is Brahman" is for instance, perception through the Shastras. Then when one thinks for oneself and distinguishes the Soul from the non-soul, there is the perception through one's self and when the Guru tells him "Thou art That", there is the perception through the Guru.

Disciple :- How is real experience perfected through these three kinds of perceptions ?

Guru :- The Shashtra says, "All things that are seen are Brahman". Then a man thinks within himself, "I am the Soul, all things which are seen by me are the non-soul." This is to be understood both by the "Vyatireka" method (i.e. to distinguish the non-soul from the Soul) and also by the "Anwaya" method which comes afterwards (i.e. that Soul

which was first of all distinguished from the non-soul is everything and everywhere).

When an aspirant arrives at this stage, Sadguru is ready to shower his grace upon him. Just as a mother through her love becomes ready to give her milk to her child, so Sadguru explains to the aspirant that what he is hunting after is himself and; nothing else. In that state the Guru and the disciple become united for the first time. This union is the first salutation of the disciple to his Guru.

Disciple :- Please explain the method of getting the perception of the Self in the Shastric way.

Guru:- When it has been thoroughly understood that all things which are seen are Brahman, the seen is to be merged in the Seer. When that is done, both the seer and the seen disappear. You might here ask how the seer can be said to disappear. The answer to that is that when the seen merges, the seer has nothing to see and hence the seer disappears. Ignorance is dispelled by knowledge and then the perception of knowledge also disappears.

Disciple :- How can things which are actually seen be made to merge and disappear ?

Guru :- Having understood that things seen are perishable, one should renounce them. If it is found difficult to renounce them then they should be seen as separate from the seer.

Disciple :- When the seer and the seen merge and disappear, a state of void ensues.

Guru :- That is true. But do not get entangled in the void because it is darkness and if you remain there, it would be like falling into a pit of ignorance.

Disciple :- Then what is to be done further ?

Guru :- The remedy is with you. Who perceives the void? It is you who do so. Do not leave that Seer of the void. There are various obstacles at this stage. If you get entangled in them you will again go back to the stage of Jiva (shown by the term "Thou" i.e. "Twam" in "Tat Twam Asi"). These obstacles are the appearance of light (Kashaya), a sense of pleasure etc.

Disciple:-How many are the Padas and what are their, characteristics ?

Guru :- "Twam Pada" shows Jiva, "Tat Pada" shows God, the "Asi Pada" shows the original source of both Jiva and Ishwara (God).

Disciple :- Can "Twam Pada" ever attain "Asi Pada", if so, by what means ?

Guru :- By renunciation, strict detachment and discrimination (i.e. distinguishing the soul from the non-soul) a Jiva can attain Brahman.

Disciple :- Who suffers death ? What is the cause of birth ?

Guru:- It is the "Ahamkara" (egoism); that suffers death. Because the body is matter and the soul is formless. The cause of birth is "Sankalpa" i.e., desire, which is the real enemy of a Jiva.

Disciple :- What path should be resorted to by an aspirant in order to attain his goal ?

Guru :- First of all reading or hearing discourses on the Shastras, then thinking over them and then experience of one's own self. The carrying out of one's duties according to one's Varna and Ashrama without any desire of fruit leads to purification of the mind, which leads to knowledge resulting in discrimination between the eternal and evanescent or perishable. The aspirant then becomes endowed with the four Sadhanas, gets initiation from a Sadguru and attains his goal.

Disciple:- What advantage is gained from reading and thinking ?

Guru :- First a good desire is born, then capacity for thinking is generated; the aspirant can then distinguish the eternal from the perishable. His mind becomes more and more minute (a stage known as "Tanumanasa"). When his ego becomes dormant, he enters the stage of "Turya" (i.e. the fourth state, beyond the three states viz. waking, dreaming and sleeping) and ultimately becomes one with it.

Disciple :- What is meant by "Bandha" and what is meant by "Moksha" (Liberation) ?

Guru :- When one desires to enjoy the fruit of one's actions, one is in "Bandha" and one is a Jiva ; when one is without any such desire, one is "Mukta" i.e. Liberated and one then becomes Ishwara (God).

(Owing to these conversations, as the disciple was of very quick grasping powers, the disciple got enlightenment and he succeeded in attaining the stage of "Samadhi" by repeatedly thinking over the subject. Both the Guru and the disciple were in the state of Samadhi for a considerable time. When they both regained the ordinary consciousness, the following conversation took place between them.)

Disciple :- I was in a state of bliss. In this waking state I do not feel happy. Daily I used to get up from sleep but today's experience is altogether different. Does the state of "Samadhi" differ from sleep or is it the same as sleep?

Guru :- The state of sleep is similar to that of “Samadhi” with this difference that in sleep the ego, being dormant, produces the illusion of the bodily existence, while in “Samadhi” the ego altogether disappears and thus there is self-experience. Both sleep and “Samadhi” spring from one source.

Disciple :- How does sleep come and whence does it come ?

Guru :- In the beginning the earth element in the body becomes void of energy and begins to merge in the water element. The whole body becomes dull and the eyes begin to close. When the water element begins to merge in the light element, a flash of divine lustre is there. Then the air element envelopes the light element and the air element later merges into ether. The opposite process takes place when one comes back to the waking state. An aspirant, having experienced this daily “Pralaya”, should thoroughly understand the nature of sleep. If he understands sleep he would understand the nature of death.

Disciple :- How many states have “Jiva” and Ishwara” got ?

Guru :- Jiva has three states viz. (1) waking corresponding to Sthula or physical body; (2) dreaming corresponding to the astral body and (3) sleeping corresponding to the “Karana” i.e. causal body. Corresponding to these three states of Jiva, Ishwara has got the three states : (1) Virata ; (2) Hiranyagarbha ; and (3) Avyakrita, The whole physical world is the Virata state. The world in the embryo state is the Hiranyagarbha state. Both these states merge in the “Avyakrita”.

Disciple :- Whence came the “Sthula” or physical body?

Guru :- From the “Karana” or causal body.

Disciple :- Whence came the astral body ?

Guru :- It is the transitory dreaming state where one sees things already seen in the physical world or sometimes things not already seen.

Disciple :- How do actions take place in the waking state ?

Guru :- Owing to the ego and the mind, actions take place through the senses. In the dreaming state, senses being merged in the mind, the mind alone displays the scenes. The physical and the dreaming state merge in the sleeping state in which the mind is also merged i.e. it cannot act but the ego is there dormant. Hence one gets the experience of deep sleep.

Disciple :- Does one get the experience of self in sleep?

Guru : This question has been already answered. However I shall explain again. The ego being dormant, one goes upto the door, as it were, and comes back.

Disciple :- Who really experiences all the three states and where does he dwell ?

Guru :- He is the Seer and is beyond the “Karana” or causal.

I have dedicated the above-mentioned conversations to the feet of Shri Sadguru.

(Sd.) SHANKAR. MAHLHAR SANT,
Nasik.

XXI

Experiences of Mr. S. T. Saygaonkar, Photographer, Nasik.

I reside opposite to the house in which this Saint resides and I have been seeing him for the last so many years; but upto this time I had not understood that there was anything special in this individual nor had I made any effort to understand it. A person generally forms an estimate of the individuality of others in this world by placing reliance upon his own intellectual capacity. But the powers of our intellect are very limited and in the search of truth, when the cloud of ignorance rolls away from one's intellect, the light of real truth shines forth. I understood the truth of the above when I came into contact with this individual only for a few days and I got certain experiences which are narrated below.

About a month and a half ago owing to worldly troubles while my mind was in a very uneasy state, Shri Gajanana Maharaja called me to see him, through a girl, in connection with some photo work. I went to him, saluted him and sat near him. He handed over to me the negative of a photo and asked me to supply him with some copies of the same and then he began a casual talk with me in his usual witty manner. I too, made some funny remarks and diverted the current of the conversation to spiritual topics which had become dear to me. About a year before this time I had begun to take very keen interest in spiritual things. I had tried to acquire knowledge of the subject from various books and had made various self-directed efforts to get realisation in actual experience by trying to put into practice the knowledge gained from books. But having no idea whether my efforts were in the right direction or not, my mind was often full of doubts and uneasy. From this bookish knowledge, I could not be sure on what particular step on the spiritual path I was standing.

Once while I was sitting in meditation I heard words to the effect that a Bengali Saint would call me to his house and meet me there. This happened about ten or twelve days before I got this accidental call from Shri Gajanana Maharaja. As the conversation turned on spiritual topics, Maharaja while sitting on his bedstead asked me to read out to him some papers. They

contained an account of the spiritual experience of a Bengali and of his having attained the ever lasting bliss of Nirvikalpa Samadhi by coming in contact with Shri Gajanan Maharaja. The message which I had received in meditation and the practical realisation, of it in my being called by Maharaja and given his Darshan, made me think that there was something wonderful in this individual, about which I had no conception before and with the idea that I should get some spiritual experience as mumukshu and that thus my life should be made worth living, I made an humble supplication at the feet of Maharaja and he too, understanding my keen desire,, gave me an assurance that he would confer his grace upon me and asked me to meet him again. Maharaja then went to Bombay and hence I too did not go see him. Eight days ago I was again called in connection with the photo and again I preferred my urgent request.

For about two or three days after that I daily went to him and passed about fifteen to twenty minutes near him. At that time he was suffering from fever and was lying down. In our conversation, however, on spiritual topics, he told me that he would confer his grace upon me after he would be cured of his illness. I then began to visit him daily for making inquiries regarding his health. I used to sit near him and the conversation was sometimes light and witty and at other times on spiritual topics. I sometimes used to read out to him portions from newspapers throwing light on these topics. I was also minutely marking everything and realised that some inscrutable divine power was repeatedly bringing before me thoughts, words or deeds in consonance with the workings of my heart. Some days later he wrote with his own hand some portions of the work of Swami Vivekananda on "Karma Yoga" which work I was reading every day and asked me to read them. The wonder of it was that these were the very portions which I had read the previous night before going to sleep.

Later on I felt that during his conversation he as it were described with his own mouth my daily actions. My faith in him began to increase day by day and later on I got very peculiar experiences owing to which, my faith in him got firmly fixed.

One day in the morning at about 9 a.m. Maharaja and myself were sitting together after having taken tea. Maharaja was then smoking a cigarette. I felt a delightful fragrant smell pervading the atmosphere. It struck me as if it proceeded from a place where some one was performing worship. I was about to ask about it but left off the idea thinking that somebody must be performing worship in the house. While these ideas were passing in my mind I thought that Maharaja was closely looking at something with concentrated attention. He told me that I should bring a garland of flowers the next day and that he would communicate to me something more according to the order of his Sadguru.

The next day was the 1st day of the month of Margashirsha. I bathed in the morning and having taken with me a good garland of flowers, went for Maharaja's Darshan. As ordered I placed the garland on the photo of Shri Narayan Saraswati and took my seat in front of Maharaja. He was sitting in front of me and was continuously smoking cigarette after cigarette and also

describing the experiences of his previous disciples. The same fragrant smell which I had felt on the day before issued and the whole atmosphere in the room became full of it and appeared purified. I began to feel a sensation resembling a trance stealing upon me. Maharaja It continued talking and when he found that my attention in listening had become less, he told me to repeat the Mantra "Soham" a hundred and eight times slowly in my mind and fixed his eyesight on my eyes. My mind was becoming calmer and calmer and I felt that it was being submerged under the waves of extreme joy. I felt that I was going down and down somewhere and a sense of complete forgetfulness of the external world was increasing. There appeared to be dense darkness everywhere, only the palpitations of the heart continued. In this state I felt some power moving up towards the brain through the spinal chord at the back and a sensation like that of branding from inside was experienced at the centre between the eye-brows. Something appeared to fall down in a line from the centre of the brain upon the heart and the former darkness then gave place to a faint light and I got the Darshan of the deity of my heart (i.e. my favourite deity) and slowly the face of the deity began to change and assume the features of my Master sitting in front of me. All my doubts dissolved away, my mind became assured and my heart became full of joy. I was then about to place my head on the feet of my master when he lightly touched my head and told me to come back to my original state. I opened my eyes and found Maharaja looking fixedly at me and his face appeared to be changing till it looked like his original face. This being a novel experience in my life I found that it gave me extreme delight. I cannot say how long I was in this state. Maharaja who was still sitting in front of me was describing the experiences of some of his good disciples but I could hear only in a sort of indistinct and hazy manner. An extremely good smell was pervading everywhere and some vague and indistinct forms of deities appeared to pass before my sight. Out of them I could distinctly see Bhagwan Ramakrishna, Bhawani and Shankar, Ganapati and OM and could recognise them.

When I regained the ordinary state of mind I handed over to Maharaja the cutting from the "Kesari" which contained a brief review and opinion on "Guru Shishya Vijaana Dipika". There were some remarks in the newspaper cutting about Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda. I had, immediately a few moments before this, the Darshan of Shri Ramakrishna in Dhyana and I thought that Maharaja was as if illustrating the connection between the inner and outer world by this. I said this and Sadgura (Maharaja) gave me a blessing that my eyesight has been purified. Later on when I used daily to repeat the Japa of "Soham", my mind got into a state of absorption and I was convinced that the only true and eternal thing, which I had been seeking so long, was extremely close to me and that I had been groping in darkness for it owing to ignorance. When my heart was enlightened by the light of knowledge through the grace of my master many things which had appeared mysterious became completely clear. One of such experiences is given below :

When as usual one morning I was repeating the Mantra "Soham", I became absorbed and felt that I was travelling far back in my life. I had seen that place twenty years before. At that time I was attending school at

Jubbulpore. There is a very charming temple of Shankar, well-known as Gupteshwar, at a distance of two miles from it. I used often to go to that temple with my friends and since then a sort of affection for that place and a love of Shiva worship had been generated in my heart. But owing to circumstances I had to leave the place as my duties called me elsewhere. But my affection for that place and my desire for the Darshan of Shiva daily increased. In 1924 I came to Nasik. Having read the Vaksudha (Nectarlike Words) of Shri Ramakrishna and the lectures of Vivekananda, I was convinced that a study of spiritual topics leads to the fulfilment of one's desire to have the Darshan of God. I then began to contemplate and to meditate with concentration of mind with a view to satisfy the keen desire of my heart to see God. But on the contrary every day my restlessness increased. I became dumb-founded and out of a sense of despondency I at last thought of leaving the path altogether. On the other hand my mind sometimes assured me that if at all there was a God in this world, I would be able to seek Him out even though He might have concealed Himself secretly somewhere even in the seven Patalas. Being thus fortified by this self-confidence I remained calm and persisted in my meditation and worship. I have already narrated above what sort of message I received in my meditation and thus while one day I was extremely troubled in my mind by worldly tribulations and was trying to seek out the happiness of peace, I received a call from this (Maharaja's) house which later on led to firm conviction. I got the experience of Nirvikalpa Samadhi and the Darshan of the deity of my heart's desire and of the place of that deity, which was familiar to me. All my misgivings and doubts disappeared in this manner.

(2) After the death of my mother in 1916, my grand-mother used to perform the worship of Ganapati with great devotion. As I was then a non-believer I had one day removed the idol without her knowledge and buried it in a pit. My grand-mother felt deeply for the loss of the idol but I then took a delight in my mischief I could have no idea of her feelings for that idol until I myself reached that stage. When, however, I got realisation, I greatly repented of what I had done. When I began practising meditation in the spiritual path, I got the Darshan of my Sadguru who was also remaining concealed for so many years and all my doubts were solved. The king Gopichand also similarly had buried in a deep pit of dung the body of Shri Jalandar Nath, the Sadguru of his mother, having lifted him up while he was in a state of Samadhi. Kanifnath came to know about it through his inner sight and he made the king Gopichand take Shri Jalandar Nath out and convinced all regarding his Yogic powers. He, in the great mercy of his heart, showered love even on him who had committed evil and made him blessed. I saw this vision in meditation (King Gopichand and Jalandar Nath, etc.) and I was convinced that Shri Gajanana Maharaja 'Gupte' (i.e. one who remains concealed) sitting in front of me was Shri Sadguru Jalandar Nath and also Shiva and thus ultimately I found the only true thing.

"OM Soham".

At the feet of Shri Krishna.

(Sd.) S.T. SAIGAONKAR.

An Experience in Meditation.

During the course of the Japa of "Soham" I one morning saw the following vision :-

After I had become completely oblivious of the external world, I saw that while I was going along a way in darkness, something cold touched my body. I searched for the thing and came to know that it was a trident ; but I could not make out who held it. When that trident-bearer and myself had traversed a long distance in the dark, the way in front became dimly lighted by a faint light and I saw that the trident-bearer was none other than my master Shri Gajanana Maharaja, I recognised him at once. When we emerged into full light I asked him, "What is this light?" Maharaja pointed his finger towards himself and asked me to see. I then got the Darshan of Shri Krishna with the conch, the wheel or disc, the mace and lotus in His four hands, walking behind Shri Gajanana Maharaja. As I bent down to touch the feet of Shri Krishna, a terrible Cobra, with its hood raised, came to attack me. But when it saw the trident of my master near me, it coiled itself round the trident.

As Lord Shri Krishna Himself told me not to be afraid, my fear disappeared. Then we all went to the Durbar of the Mother. The appearance of the Durbar beggars description. The Mother conferred her blessings upon me and asked me to go and gave me another guide. While returning I saw the following :-

A group of naked females was standing in the way with their backs turned towards me. I did not pay any attention to them. The guide led me to a river. I could see clearly the other side. I bowed to the guide and plunged into the river. I then gained consciousness of the world and found that I was sitting where I was and that the Japa was going on slowly in the inside.

26th March 1939.

(Sd.) S. T. SAIGAONKAR.

One day when as usual I was practising meditation as directed by Shri Sadguru, I got the following experience:

While the Japa was being repeated with great concentration, there was the rise in my body of the power known as Kundalini. I had heard it described in various works on Yoga and also my Sadguru had very kindly given me an idea about it but before this time I had no actual experience of it. I found on that day that the Kundalini was slowly ascending through the spinal chord. It then entered the heart and made the lotus there bloom. Then it continued to go up to the throat and I felt that its touch reached the centre of the brain. It, however, stopped there and it appeared that there was some obstruction which prevented it from proceeding further; because it began to strike on the two nerves in the spinal chord and went back to the Muladhar Chakra. I tried my utmost for about two hours and a half to remove this obstruction but got no

success. I spent a good deal of time in thinking out the nature and cause of the obstruction. I then got an answer from inside myself to the following effect :

“If you want to have clear knowledge of this part of the path, make your meditation steady at the centre between the eye brows.” Then I concentrated on the spot indicated and saw a blue light which appeared as if reflected in a mirror. A very lustrous lotus appeared in that light and a lustrous personage appeared to be sitting in meditation on that lotus. I saw a path going up to that lotus and found myself standing on that path. As my main desire was to go to that lustrous personage and have a personal talk with him, I began to move in that direction. After I had walked for a considerable length of time, I felt that I was standing before something which was like a piece of glass and the same was reflected in that glass and my further progress had been stopped by that glass. I then looked back and saw the same scene but it appeared to be at a great distance and behind the place from which I had started. I then returned back to the place whence I had started and where the scene had appeared and found again an obstruction there in the form of a glassy substance and the scene appeared to be reflected in it. As I could not find any way of passing through this obstruction, I remained at that very place looking out for some way. As I saw various lights of different colours there, I could not think of turning back from the place nor could I find any way of passing through. At last I commenced the Japa and also began to send up a hymn of praise to the lustrous personage sitting in meditation on the lotus, when to my surprise I found that that curtain of glass was slowly removed and that my path was clear. I then step by step came near that lustrous personage, who was none else than Shri Shiva Himself. On hearing me approach, that personage (i.e. Shiva) left off meditation and having cast a glance full of love towards me, made me sit near Him, and solved all my doubts and difficulties. I asked Him where my Sadguru was. He pointed to a spot where I saw a big orb of light. It was lustrous like the sun. It had been produced from the lustre of that personage and I saw a halo of innumerable suns encircling that personage. From every sun one universe was formed and the power of creating, protecting and destroying that universe appeared to emanate from that Shiva.

I got all my difficulties solved by that personage, prostrated myself at His feet, and [then stopped my meditation.

OM Tat Sat.

11th August 1939.

(Sd.) S. T. SAIGAONKAR.

XXII

Experiences of Mr. Vithal Pandurang Upadhye,
Pleader, Nasik.

Mr. Upadhye has been on friendly terms with Shri Gajanana Maharaja for a number of years. He is very quiet by nature and is very social. He has a knack of explaining the principles of Vedanta and spiritual matters in a simple manner. He also reads a good deal.

About two or three years ago, on the day of Laxmi Pujana in Diwali, when Mr. Saswadkar, Sub Registrar, was at Nasik, there were many persons sitting chitchatting in a hall in his house. Shri Gajanana Maharaja was also there. Mr. Upadhye remarked, "Maharaja, you daily make persons, Mahegaonkar teacher and others, sit in meditation. Mr. Baba Satpurkar here also has a great desire to do so. Why not make him sit now? He has been waiting for a long time for being asked to do so."

Maharaja thereupon said, "Vakil Saheb, you also have made great preparation in your former birth. Even now you must be practising Yoga for your Guru has showered his grace upon you. You have been associating with me for so many days. Have I ever even by chance asked you to sit in meditation? No. But that chance appears to have arrived to-day. Instead of asking me to make others sit, why do you not yourself sit before me today?"

As soon as Maharaja said this, Mr. Upadhye immediately got up and sat in front of Maharaja and with open eyes he immediately went into a trance. For about an hour and a half, he was not conscious even of his body. People called him, shook him and tried various other methods of rousing him but they were of no avail. His whole body had become like a log of wood.

He came to consciousness after about an hour and a half and immediately drank two big lotas of water and lay down reclining on a "Takya" (back-support). He was even then in a semi-conscious state of ecstasy and did not speak anything for about twenty or twenty-five minutes more. Maharaja also called out to him several times but he could not speak. He only made signs to him asking him to wait for some time. After about 10 or 15 minutes he got up and on being questioned by the people about his experience he gladly gave the following description. At that time Maharaja was sleeping.

"First I felt that the tip of my tongue pressed itself on the tip of the uvula which hangs down in the throat. My breath was a little restrained and the eyes were drawn upwards internally. The Sudarshana Chakra (the divine disc of Shri Krishna) appeared at the centre between the eye-brows, turning round and round and there was a light like that of a powerful electric lamp or a Chandra-Jyota (fire-works giving out light like moonlight). Then I felt there was a flaming fire near the navel and my whole body felt the sensation of burning. I was all the while trying to come upwards (from the navel) but instead I went downwards. There at first I felt cool and then again very hot. I again came up a little and felt cool, came higher up feeling cooler and cooler, when I felt that I was taking in drops of nectar which were ceaselessly dropping down from the tip of the uvula in the throat. These drops were so sweet that I cannot compare the sweetness with anything else and I cannot adequately describe

it. In the science of Yoga there are descriptions of Yogis drinking this nectar. I got that experience directly myself. I am feeling sense of deep joy.”

At this time Maharaja who was sleeping up to now got up and said, “Oh Vithal, Oh Pandurang, let me know what you saw so that I may also share in the joy. My good Sir, nobody tells such things to others. He has got it with him and he himself enjoys the pleasure of it. Owing to the great merit acquired in the last birth, if a person carries on the practice with great and disinterested faith in his Sadguru, he becomes quite prepared to attain the highest goal even while living in worldly life and to experience the joy himself.”

Mr. Upadhye then repeated his experience to Maharaja and gave again a detailed description and remarked, “ Maharaja, if you had not gone to sleep, I would not have been able to regain consciousness so soon.”

Then all the persons there went to Godavari for a stroll Next day Mr. Upadhye came to Maharaja and said, “Maharaja, I reached my house yesterday with great difficulty because waves of that joy were ceaselessly over flooding me and I was feeling as if I would fall down.” He that day also narrated the previous day's experience to other people who were sitting near Maharaja and who were not present on the previous day.

XXIII

Experiences of Mr. Vishwanath Gopal Vaidya of Nasik.

The Darshan of Shri Gajanana Maharaja, the bestowal of His grace and experiences resulting from it.

I am a man who is a follower of the Vedic tradition. For the last forty years I have continuously followed the practice of taking a bath, performing Sandhya adoration, repeating the Japa of Gayatri and reading “Shri Guru Charitra” (a well known poetical work in Marathi describing the life and miracles of the great Saint Shripada Shri Vallabha of Kuravpur who took the next birth of Shri Nrisinha Saraswati of Narsoba Wadi, regarded as an incarnation of Shri Datta). I read in that work that if a person writes the whole work in his own handwriting and reads from it every day, he would experience the presence of God. I accordingly commenced writing of the work from Thursday the 5th of January 1931 and completed it on Friday the 5th of November 1931. I thus required ten months to complete writing of the whole work. I then began to read from it. The experiences that I got while I was writing that work have been briefly described by me in my book “Shri Guru Kripadhyaya” (a chapter regarding the grace bestowed by my Master). The real fruit of all this my penance of the last forty years is the Darshan of my master Shri Gajanana Maharaja and the bestowal of his grace upon me. I narrate below in brief how I got his Darshan, how his grace was bestowed upon me and how since his grace was bestowed, I am becoming engrossed in meditation and am almost swimming continuously in an ocean of joy for the last five years.

On Datta Jayanti day, i.e. on Sunday the 15th of December 1929, I got the following dream :-

I saw in the dream that I was in the house of my son-in-law Mr. Narayan Gangadhar Sahasrabuddhe, an Assistant Veterinary Surgeon at Shri Gonda. While I was sitting in the front hall, a lame and decrepit person carried on the back of another came there with ten or twelve other persons, got down and went crawling into the inner hall of the house and took his seat there. All persons then bowed to this person. Observing this I also went there and bowed to him. I thought that he might be a saint. I returned to the front hall. Some time's later the lame person (saint) came from the inner hall to the front hall near me and asked me, "When did you come from Nasik?" I replied that I came on the day before. He said, "Come to my house, we shall talk there." He then went away with some persons, being carried on the back of another person. Some persons remained behind to accompany me, with whom I went to the saint's house, which was situated on a hill beyond the Saraswati river. I went and sat down in an apartment, when the lame saint came there and asked me about all the events at Nasik. I told him that a sacrifice was being performed at Nasik and many Shastris had assembled there. The saint then took a piece of paper, wrote upon it Rupees Seven (7) and gave the paper to me. I saw what was written upon it, then looked into my pocket but saw that I had not got seven rupees. The saint said that it did not matter but that I should not forget to give that amount when the time would come. I then started from the place after having bowed to him again. Here the dream ended. After I awoke I wrote down the dream in my diary. Four years later I found the dream realised. How this happened will be described in its proper place and sequence.

In February 1933, one Mr. Saswadkar who was a Sub-Registrar at Niphad, started one day by the railway train to go to Poona. Mr. Jayarambhai Karmarkar, proprietor of the Samarth Press of Nasik who is residing in my house also started by the same train, as he had to go to Sajjangad (a place where there is the Samadhi of the Saint Ramdas). The two gentlemen happened to meet in the train. During their conversation Mr. Saswadkar casually remarked that one great saint was staying in Nasik for the last eight or ten years and that it was a wonder that the people of Nasik did not know him nor had they any idea of his greatness. Mr. Karmarkar asked him about the saint's name, original place of residence and his present address. But Mr. Saswadkar instead of giving the information merely remarked that everything would be known in the near future. Mr. Karmarkar, who is a friend of mine and who is my neighbour, narrated this talk to me when he returned to Nasik. I then made inquiries in Nasik but I could not trace the whereabouts of the saint. I then intended to go to Niphad and see Mr. Saswadkar but owing to some unavoidable reasons I had to postpone my plan till the month of May. I then went to Niphad on Sunday the 2nd May 1933, and introduced myself to Mr. Saswadkar and asked him information about the saint at Nasik. Mr. Saswadkar was only too glad to give me the information. Not only this but he also showed me some letters written to this saint by some of his disciples, Mr. Patankar, Advocate, Bombay, and some others, containing a description of

their spiritual experiences after they had received initiation at the hands of this saint, Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I was simply wonderstruck after reading the experiences described in those letters. After returning from Niphad on Wednesday the 3rd of May 1933, I went on the 4th of May 1933 to Shri Gajanana Maharaja and having given him information regarding myself had a frank talk with him for some time and then I returned home. Even in the short time that I was in his company, I could see his child-like innocence, his absolute want of egotism, his even-mindedness and his extremely keen desire to uplift other human souls. I found that he was as if absolutely unconscious of self and I was greatly delighted to see this.

Since then I every day used to go to him for Darshan. Six or seven days later i.e. on Wednesday the 10th of May 1933, when I had been for his Darshan he lighted a cigarette and began to smoke it. All along it was burning in a flame, which is generally not the case. It also emitted a fragrant smell like that of an attar. I was greatly surprised at this. Maharaja then said, "I shall show you the unextinguishable flame of the Soul, just as I have shown this flame to you. Come to me tomorrow in the morning." Accordingly on the next day in the morning, I went to him. It was Thursday the 11th of May 1933. He told me the Mantra "Soham" and asked me to repeat it and also explained to me how to practise for the manifestation of the light. I accordingly started practising for half-an-hour in the morning and in the evening. Two days later Maharaja remarked to me that I was committing mistakes in my practice. He explained to me my mistakes. Within a week after that I got the following experience.

In my meditation I saw a flame which began to enlarge and in the flame I saw the extremely shining form of Shri Krishna. When I mentioned this fact to Maharaja, he appeared to be glad and asked me to continue the practice. Then every day at the time of meditation I saw the flame and in the flame the shining forms of various deities. One day Maharaja asked me whether I can see these visions after shutting my eyes, to which I replied in the negative. He then placed his right hand on my head, asked me to shut my eyes and (told me not to get frightened at the things which would be seen. He said that they would not touch me. After a few moments hills, big rivers, deep valleys, forests, tigers, serpents, jungles, gardens, etc., began to be seen. In my daily meditation various saints, mahantas, all deities, all full of life, in short, almost the whole Universe began to be seen in that flame. All these visions appeared like scenes in a cinema film, succeeding each other, and stopping for a short time. When this study continued for some time, Maharaja stopped it. Some days later Maharaja went to Niphad to Mr. Saswadkar and I followed him there two or three days afterwards. There one night i.e. on Thursday the 29th of June 1933, when all other people were asleep, Maharaja said to me that he would take me into the Nirguna State (where there are no forms and attributes) and placed his hand on my head. Instantaneously I began to hear the sound of "Soham" loudly in my ears. Then he asked me to repeat the Japa of "Soham" while lying down. I did so and in the state of half consciousness and half sleep I began to hear the loud sound of "Soham" and a gentle sound of bells. I narrated this in the morning to Maharaja and asked him what this sound of bells was.

He gave me a practical illustration and said, "When we go to a temple we first sound the bell and then take the Darshan of the Deity. Similarly this gentle sound of bells which fills your ears is the sound of Brahman. There are also ten other different kinds of sounds. You will get experience of them also. When you will begin to hear these different kinds of sounds, you will get the Darshan of the Supreme Soul by going into the Brahmarandhra (the centre of the brain)." He explained to me in this manner and I was satisfied with the explanation. He also blessed me saying that these divine sounds of Brahman have been given to me and I would hear them always. Accordingly, when in meditation, I see various visions in the light of the flame, and hear various kinds of these divine sounds. Sometimes there is the sound of the blowing of a conch, sometimes of the beating of drums, sometime of a guitar, sometimes of playing upon the tabor, sometimes of anklets, sometimes of thunder, sometimes of the Murali (flute) and sometimes of the Sarangi (fiddle).

A few days before Maharaja went to Niphad he asked me for money. I had then with me a currency note of Rs.5/-, which I handed over to him. Upon this he said, "Now only two rupees are due from you." At that time I did not understand the meaning and context of what he said. On the Guru Pournima day next i.e. on Friday the 7th of July 1933, although Maharaja was not at Nasik, I went to his house, garlanded his photo and kept two rupees as Dakshina before it. A few days later while I was lying down on a chair and had shut my eyes, I suddenly remembered the dream which I had in the December of 1929. The saint whom I saw in the dream was lame just as Maharaja is lame. The saint had written rupees seven on a piece of paper. When Maharaja asked for money and I gave Rs.5, he had remarked that Rs.2 had remained. I happened also to keep Rs.2 before his photo on the Guru Pournima day.

All these things tallied with the dream which I had four years before. I was favoured with this dream four years previously. Foretelling as it were that I would meet Shri Gajanana Maharaja, I looked upon it as nothing but the grace of Shri Dattatraya and was greatly delighted. I was also greatly amused to see this divine arrangement of things. I then went again to Shrigonda to see the, actual state of things there. I found that there was a Samadhi (tomb) of the Saint Pralhad Mahanaja with a big hall in front of it. Every year a fair is held there. There is one work entitled "Nutan Santa Mahatmya" (the greatness of new saints) written in Ovi metre. A life sketch of Pralhad Maharaja is given in that work and Narayan Saraswati has been mentioned as the name of his Guru. The name of the Guru of Shri Gajanana Maharaja is also Narayan Saraswati. I was surprised to find this and I could then understand why the dream was seen at Shrigonda and why also in that dream I saw the lame saint. When I went to Maharaja in the afternoon, I told him the whole thing regarding the dream, how the account of Rs.7 tallied and why I had the dream at Shrigonda. He merely smiled at this.

Later on Maharaja told me a different kind of practice altogether. When I commenced it, after a few days I saw in the light of the flame one unknown saint sitting in a posture. Sometimes I could only see his face and a halo of

light round it. After having seen this again and again for many days, I mentioned the fact to Maharaja. Thereupon on 5th of June 1934, he told me to go to Rao Saheb Gupte who had a photo of his Guru and to have an enlargement of that photo prepared and to keep it with me for worship. I did accordingly. I was surprised to find that the unknown saint who appeared in the light of the flame in my meditation was none other than Narayan Saraswati, the Guru of Gajanana Maharaja. When I narrated this to Maharaja, he said, "I showed you the form of my Guru and in order to convince you I asked you to go to Rao Saheb Gupte and to have an enlargement of the photo. You should now contemplate upon him (my Guru)."

On 14th of August 1934 when I had been to Maharaja in the morning he said, "What sort of trouble is going on at Bombay?" People in his house told me that he was talking like this since the previous night. I asked Maharaja whether any letter etc. had been received to which he replied, "Where is the necessity of a letter? Can we not see ourselves?" While he was saying this, a telegram from Mr. Nanasaheb Samartha was received from Bombay, to the effect that Shankar was lying seriously ill and requesting the immediate presence of Maharaja there. Maharaja proceeded immediately to Bombay and found that Mr. Samartha's nephew Shankar was seriously ill, suffering from meningitis and doctors had given up all hope. This nephew, in a few days, recovered from the illness through the grace of Maharaja. This incident shows that Yogis can see what is going on in different places.

According to the orders of Maharaja I practised meditation for two years, half-an-hour in the morning and half-an-hour in the evening. Owing to this, now as soon as I shut my eyes I can see light at any time and at any place. My mind becomes so engrossed in the visions I see that I become unconscious regarding my surroundings and I forget all mundane matters. Although these visions are seen by the inward sight, still I feel as if I see them with my physical eyes. I first of all see a divine light and then these visions are seen with the help of it and in it. It is not that the same visions are always seen. Different visions are seen at different times. Then some are seen and others disappear and altogether new and unknown things are seen. It means that the incomprehensible things in the Infinite are made objects of sight through the grace of Maharaja, and the mind becomes engrossed and unconscious of external things. If a person has to leave his mortal coil while he is in this state, he again becomes a Yogi in the next birth as the Geeta says.

I narrate below some instances of visions seen at the time of meditation, which later on were actually found to be realised in the material world.

Once while I was sitting in meditation I saw that I went to the house of my friend Mr. Rambhau Joshi at Nasik and opened a black box in a dark room there. It appeared that the box contained some old broken pots, some torn clothes and other lumber. In addition there were two books, the second and third parts of Yoga Vasishtha. I saw these books and kept them in their place. This vision then disappeared and after completing my meditation, I went to the

house of Mr. Rambhau and asked him whether he had a black box in a dark room in his house. He replied in the affirmative. I then asked him whether there were any sacred books in that box, to which he replied that the box contained merely old lumber and that it contained no sacred books. I asked him to examine the box carefully. He thought it was a joke but when I repeatedly urged him to do so, he took a lantern and having opened the box, examined it. Of course it contained lumber but when it was removed the two parts of Yoga Vasishtha were found underneath bearing the name written in English of Mr. Rambhaus relative residing at Poona. I then narrated to him the vision I had seen and all people there were struck with wonder. He presented the books to me. When I saw the vision and found its realisation in the physical world, I was greatly delighted and felt myself blessed in that Shri Gajanana Maharaja was guiding me and making me progress in the path of Yoga.

On another occasion i.e. on 8th January 1935, I saw a small wire which began to move in a zigzag course and turned into a big wheel and various kinds of light issued out of the zigzag movements which mingled with each other and then that wheel began to whirl round and round.

On another occasion I saw a big hill and about a hundred or a hundred and fifty children in fantastic dresses sitting there. At the bottom of the hill I saw the Great Lord Shri Krishna standing surrounded by Gopis who were playing with tipris (pieces of wood specially prepared for keeping time with music). While I was observing this Lord Shri Krishna said to me, "Why are you merely looking on? Get up and come to play tipris." I accordingly got up, took up the tipris and for some time played with Him.

On another occasion i.e. on 12th January 1936, I saw a vision while I was sitting in meditation that I was moving about in a garden, when a garland of Bakul flowers fell down of itself from above round my neck. I took it in my hand and began to walk ahead when some one asked me not to go that way but to the other side. I was surprised at this and cast my eyes in the other direction, when I saw a beautiful lady wearing a white garment sleeping, using her arm as a pillow. I then went to her, placed the garland round her neck and fell down before her in obeisance.

Once while in meditation I found myself travelling in an awful and dense forest and suddenly the way appeared to be closed. On all four sides it appeared that a wall had been constructed by placing one stone upon another. Seeing the way closed I jumped over the wall and proceeded. I saw deep valleys in which there were tigers, wolves, lions and big serpents. While I was flying over the valley, the carnivorous beasts began to roar loudly and were planning to pounce upon me; but as I was flying in the air, I was beyond their reach and I was laughing at this.

Once in meditation I saw myself sitting in a temple of Maruti and began to jump from one Maruti Temple to the roof of another Maruti Temple. In this manner I took the Darshan of all Marutis in Nasik and Panchavati.

I thus see various visions, my mind becomes engrossed in them and I taste deep joy.

(Sd.) VISHWANATH GOPAL VADYA.

Experiences of Mr. Pandurang Lakshman Bhagwat,
991, Sadashiv Peth, Poona City, No. 2.

I received initiation from Shri Gajanana Maharaja on 12th May, 1938. It was a Thursday and the day of Nrisinhajayanti, Vaishakha Shudha 13. For about 4 and 5 days after that, different kinds of faces were indistinctly seen. At intervals Maharaja used to ask me to sit before him and to concentrate. I could then see waves of different colours going away from me and coming towards me. If, however, I sat at home for meditation, I could not see them but could see a spark off light. A few days later, the spark also disappeared as was foretold by Maharaja. A few days passed and one night as I was lying down on my bed, I saw big letters of Soham in celestial light in a corner of the room. They remained for about five seconds and then disappeared.

I then left Nasik for Poona with the permission of Maharaja and began to practise meditation there. But owing to ill-health, for about two months I could not practise to my satisfaction; still I could see waves of different colours going away from and coming to me.

Then on Ashwin Vadya Seventh i.e. on 15th October 1938 while I was lying down on my bed at night, I saw the full moon and small stars in cloudless light. This was communicated to Maharaja through Mr. Bhawe. Maharaja thereupon remarked that it was merely the beginning but higher things would follow. I then began to practise more zealously. In the waves of colour proceeding from and towards me, occasionally I saw flashes of lightning.

About a day or two prior to Guru Dwadashi (i.e. Ashwin Vadya 12), I saw a long strip of dark blue colour and a ball of light attached to it. That ball came towards me and then receded and disappeared.

On the 6th of November (Kartika Shuddha 14) early in the morning, having finished my practice, I was simply lying down on my bed, when I felt as if the doors of a cupboard were opened and saw a big stream of light coming out and then immediately disappearing. On the same day I went to Bombay. I saw in meditation occasionally faces of persons but could not recognise them. I also saw some thing written in the form of a Pothi.

While in Bombay, on 11th November 1938, I saw a lighted lamp in the Niranjana (brass-pot) filled with ghee, which immediately disappeared. Next night while I was lying down on my bed prior to sleep and was repeating the mantra Japa, I saw before me a chauranga (four-footed stool used for worship) on which some one had performed worship and around that chauranga four or five samayees (brass-stands) in each of which four or five wicks were burning. A sound of words was heard to the effect, "Worship is finished. Come on to receive Prasada." I told about this vision to Mr. Bhawe next day when he came to Bombay. He told me that I should go to Nasik and that Maharaja would give further directions on the spiritual path. I then went to

Poona and reached Nasik on 5th December 1938. On 9th December 1938 in the morning while I was practising meditation. I saw a big ball of light on a candle-stand.

In this month Maharaja asked me various questions in order to see how far I had progressed. He, therefore, told me to repeat for some days the Japa 6000 times daily with a rosary in my hand. In the days when I was doing this, whenever I looked at the light of the lamp while I was performing my daily worship, I could see lotuses of different kinds in the flame. Occasionally I see such lotuses at the six plexuses in the body. During the last two or three months various visions are being Seen.

Once I could see Ganapati in a clear light. Some days later I saw Devi coming out of the flames of fire. On her right side there was a lion. When the Goddess disappeared, for about two minutes I experienced a calmness of mind never experienced before. I once saw the great Maharaja (Shri Narayan Saraswati) sitting on a pata (wooden seat) while I was performing my daily worship. One night while I was lying down on my bed, I saw a personage having matted hair. I felt that there was some one with me there, who said to that personage that he had come for Darshan. That personage then turned his face aside. When I said that I had come for Darshan that personage turned his face towards me, accepted my salutations with a smile and then disappeared. Some days later, consecutively for two days, "devharas" (wooden seats for gods), materials of worship, religious books, flowers etc. with a lighted samayee (brass-stand) were seen.

On another occasion I saw some women going with plates of sweetmeats to the apartments of Gods (Devaghar), in the centre of which an (electric lamp was burning and Suwasinis (women with husbands living) sitting together for receiving "Haladi Kunku".

Besides these visions, while I practise meditation, I feel that I am sitting in light, which however is not steady. Sometimes there is darkness in the beginning, succeeded by light afterwards. Sometimes I see this light spreading on my body and to a long distance outside. Sometimes I forget my own existence and become absorbed in this light. Without any effort I sometimes go to the Chakra between the eye-brows and being merged in contemplation there, I enter into light.

Though I am engaged in meditation, I am fully conscious of any external contacts with my body. Sometimes thoughts come over crowding and I have to brush them aside with effort. I have not as yet experienced the state of absence of thought.

991, Sadashiw Peth,
Poona City No. 2

(Sd.) PANDURANG LAXMAN BHAGWAT

XXV

An Extract from a letter dated 7th July 1938 written to
Shri Gajanana Maharaja by B. V. Deshmukh, Esqr. B.A., LLB.,
Advocate, Poona, from Poona.

359/2, Narayan Peth,
Poona City.

I was very glad to receive your letter. Not a single day passes without my remembering you. I specially remember you when I go to bed at about 9-30 or 10 p.m. Once I saw this vision :

A bust extremely lustrous and extraordinarily beautiful was seen in the midst of white light. It was wearing an orange-coloured robe. I was greatly delighted at seeing this and my mind began to desire that such a sight might daily be seen.

(Sd.) B. V. DESHMUKH, alias BABA DESHMUKH.

XXVI

Experiences of Mr. Balkrishna Mahadeo Gadkari,
residing at Narayan Peth, House No. 110, Poona City.

I first got the Darshan (sight) of Shri Gajanana Maharaja in the month of May, 1929. After I had the good fortune of being in his company for four or five days, he made me sit near him and placed the right palm of his hand on my head. He told me to shut my eyes and fix my mind inside on the movements of breath and asked me to go downwards (mentally). When in this manner I had gone down to the anus, he favoured me with the Japa of "Soham" there. A few minutes later he told me to come up to the navel region. When I had repeated the Japa of "Soham" for five minutes there, he in his great mercy manifested to me a strong light resembling a flash-light and said, "This is the light of your own soul. By means of the "Soham" Japa you will be able to see it constantly." After some days during which the Japa at the navel region continued, he made me go down again to the Muladhar Chakra and when I began the Japa there, there was a sensation of vibrations ; and I began to feel the shocks of this vibrations of the Japa first in my ears and thence they spread to the eyes. As soon as this happened, he ordered me to fix my mind on the centre between the eye-brows and repeat the Japa there. This Japa with the sensation of vibrations at the centre between the eyebrows continued for two years, giving rise to the following experiences :-

At night when everything was quiet, there began a gentle sound resembling whistling in the ears and the mind owing to the sound began to feel a sense of joy. Some days later a sound like that of a water-fall began to be heard which was succeeded by the sound of bells. In both the ears sounds of the striking of bells began to be heard. One day when I woke up in the early morning, these sounds of the bells were very loud. Wherever my sight and

mind were directed from the feet up towards the head, the shocks (vibrations) of these sounds of bells could be felt. These shocks became unbearable and I began to feel afraid that if these sounds continued, either I would become mad or that the sounds would come out by making a hole in some part of the body. In this condition I offered a prayer to my master Gajanana Maharaja, when in a moment I got the Darshana of two great Yogis at the centre between the eye-brows. They had long matted hair and long white beard. After that I had the Darshan of the great Maharaja (i.e. Narayan Saraswati) and of Shri Gajanana Maharaja and instantaneously I got sleep. When I woke up after a long interval, I found that the sound of bells was very gentle.

Later on I got the following experiences:-

(1) The experiences resulting from the Japa of Soham accompanied with vibrations: I saw an eye at the centre between the eye-brows, with shining precious stones set all round the pupil and a blue light issuing out of the pupil, in which light I saw the form of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I used to get this Darshan of my master continually for some days. At present I get it occasionally.

(2) In the sky I see bright pearls of the size of big berry fruits, shining stars and flowers, serpent-like shapes formed of rows of pearls, circles of pearls, a big cobra with its hood raised formed of circles of pearls and near it a serpent-like shape without the hood. I see all these forms wherever I cast my eyes in water, in fire, in the flame of a lamp, from which they appear to come out in a quick succession. In this connection I remember the verse in the Geeta :

“Weapons cannot cut this (Soul) and the fire cannot burn it.”

All these serpent like shapes are seen, even when the eyes are shut, in the internal sky. There is no necessity of making any effort.

(3) In the flame of the ghee-lamp, a net of rays resembling the plumage of a peacock is seen and pearls appear to come out of it in a quick succession. In that net I see an eye, having four concentric circles, which is very lustrous.

(4) When I wake up after my first sleep at night, while my eyes are shut, I see a shining circle coming out and moving from the right eye to the left and vice versa.

(5) When I sit for meditation at night with my eyes shut I see shining clouds moving quickly.

(6) Darshan of Kamdhenu (the divine cow which yields all desires)

I saw in the interior of my heart a cow, white like crystal, touching with its tongue all the parts of my body and through love showering down sproutings of milk from its breasts. There was a big lake of this milk and I

began to swim in it. I got this Darshan four or five times. The joy that I felt at the time beggars description.

There are various visions of the kind described above. All this is due to the grace of my Divine Master.

“OM Tat Sat”

At the feet of Maharaja,
My Divine Master

110, Narayan Peth, Poona
18th March 1939.

(Sd.)
BALKRISHNA MAHADEV GADKARI

XXVII

Spiritual experiences of Mr. K. K. Pradhan and an account of his first meeting.

I am here at Nasik for the last five years or so but it was not till February 1937 that I heard about Mr. Gajanan Murlidhar Gupte alias Shri Gajanan Maharaja of Nawa Darwaja, Nasik. It was in the course of some talk with some visitors to my place. Our conversation drifted from every day casual talk towards the intricacy of Adhyatma. Finding me interested in the subject, especially in acquiring some insight into the spiritual world, one of the visitors just by way of information referred to the name of the above personage. His introduction of the latter was very cautiously worded, with the utmost care to eliminate exaggeration either way.

The description was enough to start curiosity in any heart. I immediately made an appointment with my visitor friend to come to me at a particular hour on a particular day and take me to the so-called saint. After the visitor left, my mind had quite a riot of thoughts, ideas, and imagination within me. I thought to myself “If he be really a saint as said, how is it that for the last five years that I am here in Nasik I did not hear anything about him? Again I have never heard of a real saint belonging to C. K. P. Community except Shree Rama Maruti Maharaja of Kalyan whose fame to the effect is far and wide. He has a Samadhi at Kalyan. His friends and disciples have published a book about the life of the man. How is it that even a single writing about this man did not ever come to my notice? Who can say, the report is not an exaggeration of the man’s qualities?”

However the heart within was almost jumping with curiosity to meet the Saint at the appointed hour. It must be frankly admitted that my mental inclinations from my early boyhood were towards implicitly believing in Divinity, construed by my imagination in whatever phenomena or deity. I read the writings of Shree Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramatirtha etc., spiritual luminaries, at a very young age and my passion for attaining some spiritual experience grew so strong that, when I was in the first year in college, I actually used to go to the Fergusson Hills at Poona and

practise the incantations of the Mantra, "OM". One day it so happened that during the course of my incantations of "OM" at the top of my voice, all of a sudden I felt heat at my backbone and an all pervading and self-enveloping electric wave of tremendous joy passed through my heart. I felt that the frail vessel of my body could not contain the joy and would distend so as to burst out and break with the force. I was half delighted and half afraid. After a few days the joy again returned, this time less intense and once again, lesser and lesser in intensity, while finally it, as if, got saturated in my physical constitution. With this experience, however, I felt standing on the skirts of the two worlds, the outer and the inner and it became imperative to bring about an adjustment between these two views. Any way I could not do it and I felt many times quite unable to attend to ordinary daily routine duties as efficiently as I should nor could I concentrate properly on my studies. My friends had occasions to remark about my absent mindedness. My career was about to suffer and I left the pursuit of the divine knowledge half way. A curtain was dropped by me on that aspect of the inner faculties as if with a vehemence and I became quite stolid and a practical every-day man.

I very well remember the day and the hour we went to meet the Saint. Our way lay through lanes and by-lanes of Nasik City and we ultimately came to a low-roofed humble house at the corner of one of them, near the temple of Rama popularly known as "Bayancha Rama". It had a small chowk at the opening with an old-typed well in the middle and the way to the Saints room was through a narrow corridor in the interior. I was half embarrassed, half afraid within. I took out my shoes at the door and got in, to find a very emaciated and a lean man with cheek-bones high and an intelligent expression on his face welcoming us there with folded hands and a winning smile. He was not old as I had thought him to be, rather a middle-aged man as I found him. He started his talk with humour. The room was a spacious one with a bedstead in one corner covered by a bed spread on it and a mosquito curtain on its frame with red sewn borders. Some photos of unknown saints adorned the white washed walls. There was a gramophone machine on a stand in another corner. A few chairs and an humble but clean carpet spread on the ground were the only additional decorations of the hall. There was a tin of cigarettes near the man, who enjoyed a few from them during our talk which was about several every-day matters. We took tea at his place and returned homewards, I finding nothing unusual in the person.

I said to myself, "Is this man a Saint ? As for me I do not find any saintliness about him. I can say, he is a loving and good man-good to have as a friend."

I very cleverly hid my opinion about the man from my visitor friend-an act I would be very much loath to repeat- only with an idea not to wound any feeling of reverence fostered by him about the person. To his queries I replied only half-heartedly and returned home with a feeling of waste of time and trouble I almost forgot the incident of my visit by the time I was in.

The psychologists tell us that many times the state of forgetfulness is only a state of treasuring in our subconscious mind what we do not parade on

the strata of our conscious mind. It appeared that somewhere deep into my subconscious mind the memory about the man lay. I felt, God knows how, an inclination of practising a little of meditation after my return. I sat for Dhyana almost without my will and lo ! the same shooting joy full of its intensity but shred of its tremours was suddenly felt within my heart. I felt I was as if peeping into a temple to view the steady flame of the oil lamp before the deity. Who caused this all ? How is it that I could not get the joy before and who is HE, the great one, that revived it in me this evening ?

The reply to all these queries...?

From that day, I felt I have launched my boat on a steady course of water; steadily but surely I feel I am advancing on the path of spiritualism and a master hand is guiding my spiritual destiny. Whenever I find leisure I run to my master, sit in his aura, get the divine thrills and come home.

Can I now say my acquaintance with him has ripened? With a really great soul, I now find acquaintance is too poor a word to use-no it is not intimacy-not friendship-it is merging into him in his fullness. He holds that spiritual beauty within must have its expression into polished outward actions and behaviour. He many times says, "Oh, we Haridasas stand at the confluence of three rivers, Beauty, Truth and Joy. I actually feel within like that. Nay, I have caught hold of the origin of these three aspects of the One all pervading. Oh, I have become that One."

And the nectar-like words from his lips have a divine effect, upon those around who understand him. His manners are naturally very sweet, so nobody who visits him can expect to meet with discourtesy ; on the other hand he will be very hospitably received with scrupulous care to make him feel that he is enjoying an-ordinary jolly company. The secret of this Saint's greatness appears to be in carefully hiding his inward tower-like greatness. His humbleness surpasses all his other virtues and has given him a childlike temperament. He hears with rapt attention equally the learned discourses on Adhyatma and the every day gabble about the minor details of living. He calls himself a student in the line, while those who call themselves masters, cannot with that tremendously quick flash, actually start inner Adhyatmic energy of their visitors as this humble-looking individual.

Verily God on earth is here represented by his humble messenger Shri Gajanana Maharaja of Nasik, the unrivalled Yogi.

(Sd.) K. K. PRADHAN,
Income Tax Inspector,
Nasik District.

7th October 1938.

XXVIII

Experiences of Mr. Kashinath Ramchandra Gandekar.

I am giving below a brief sketch of how I happened to meet Shri Gajanana Maharaja and of the benefit I derived by coming in contact with him in respect of Spiritual Experiences, which I had noted down in short from time to time.

When I was at Dhulia, Mr. D. N. Raje was a post-master there. He was well-known as being proficient in the knowledge of astrology. Many persons used to go to him for astrological solution according to the Sayana System and many also go even now. He has written two or three books on astrology. I later on came to realise his proficiency in the subject. As I had a liking for the subject, I also used to visit him very often. These visits later on led to great familiarity with him. We used to visit each other very often.

Once when I had been to Mr. Raje's house, I found that he was not at home but saw a very lean and lame man sitting there. On being asked, this lame man told me that Mr. Raje had gone to the office as he had morning duty that day.

For three or four days later I did not go to Mr. Raje's house at all. When I went to his house after that I saw Mr. Raje and also the same lame man sitting on a chair near him. As I took my seat, the lame man took out a cigarette and began to smoke it. At that time Sub-Registrar Mr. Saswadkar and Engineer Raosaheb Gupte were talking with the lame man. I was talking with Mr. Raje, I felt the smell of something very fragrant. I asked Mr. Raje whence he had obtained such sweet-smelling scented sticks. I thought at the time that somebody must have been worshipping the gods in the inner part of the house and that the smell must have been of the scented sticks burnt there.

Mr. Raje said to me, "Let us go out. I said, "You have not replied to my question regarding the scented sticks." He said, "Come out, I shall tell you." After this we came out of the house. Mr. Raje then said, "It was not the smell of scented sticks. When that lame man who is sitting on the chair smokes a cigarette, such fragrant smell usually comes out. He is a Saint. He belongs to my caste and my mother has great faith in him. My mother is very old and naturally has a believing tendency and she four or five times had experienced that things told by him had come out true. She is nearly eighty five. I myself have no very great faith in him. He came here being invited by my mother about seven or eight days ago. Many persons, specially of our caste, come for his Darshan in the evening. Wherever he sits at night, such a smell is felt. He does not eat anything for three or four days at a time. He only takes tea four or five times a day. One of his feet is dried up from below the knee. Whenever he has to walk, he takes a big stick and supports himself upon it. Whenever he takes his meals, he never eats more than one-fourth of an ordinary wheat cake. As I have no faith in gods or religion, I have no very great faith in him also, but it is true that I am full of wonder at the miracles he performs. Some

persons come to him at night for learning practices of Yoga.” I then asked Mr. Raje whether the man would give answers to questions put to him. Mr. Raje told me to try and see as he himself never asked him any questions. After this talk Mr. Raje went to the Post Office and I went home.

Next day at about 4 p. m. I went to Mr. Raje's house and found that man (Gajanana Maharaja) there sitting alone. I saluted him and sat down. He said that Mr. Raje had not returned from his office. I said, “I have come to pay a visit to you.” He said, “I am a poor, weak, lame man. What work can you have with me? Where is the necessity of your paying a visit to me? What do I know? etc.” I sat for a short time there and then returned home. I then commenced going to him daily. In three or four days I got sufficiently familiar with him and one day I told him that I had a great desire to know the way which would lead to the realisation of God. He thereupon replied that he knew nothing of the matter and hence could not say anything. I, however, continued going to him and got into closer touch with him. I also felt the sweet smell on several occasions and saw some minor miracles. This made me think that he knew much about spiritual matters but that he was purposely avoiding telling me about them. Two or three days later I said to him, “Maharaja, you must tell me. One saint has told me that in a particular year one would come and show me the right path. This is that year.” He then asked me about the saint and what he had told me. I then narrated to him the following :

“I had been to Pandharpur for the Darshan of Shri Panduranga with some friends. We stayed there for about fifteen or twenty days. I there heard that there was a well-known Saint who was known by the name of “Tapakir Buwa” but people said that only those who are destined to see him could see him. I since then had a keen longing to get his Darshan. Eight days passed away without our being able to see him. On the ninth day when we had been to the river Chandrabhaga for a bath, he accidentally came there for the purpose of taking water. As people said that he was the “Tapakir Buwa”, we proceeded to take his Darshan ; but he began to run away. We ran after him for a long distance but did not succeed in reaching him. We came back and completed our bath. “Tapakir Buwa” again came near the river and made a sign to us. We approached him. He said, “Place your head on my feet.” We did so. He then said, “Take this Tirth (holy water).” He had a little water in a pot, little of which he poured in my palm and said, “See, this water is the remnant of the water which I had taken for answering my call of nature. If you wish to take it as the “Tirtha”, then take it.” He then began to look at us. We drank the water. Then he said, “I am going now.” We, thereupon, prayed to him saying, “It is our sincere desire that we should often come in contact with saints like you and thus ultimately get to know God.” He replied, “After a particular number of years I shall meet you again and will teach you certain methods. But you will not be able to recognize me. If you would practise those methods with firm faith and devotion you will meet God every day.” So saying he began to run away. Only two of us had the good fortune of being present at this interview.”

After narrating this previous history I said to Shri Gajanana Maharaja, “This is the year mentioned by Tapakir Buwa. You must, therefore, teach me.”

When I pressed him in this manner, Maharaja said, "This incident of Pandharpur is true. I shall, therefore, teach you what I know. But be sure that I am not "Tapakir Buwa". I then asked him when we were to begin. He replied that we would commence from the next day and asked me to go to him next day at seven in the morning.

Next day I went to him at about 8 a.m. after having taken my bath. Gajanana Maharaja said, "Of course we are going to begin from today. But have you been formerly initiated by anybody? If not, you must be initiated." I replied that I had been initiated many years ago. Then he asked me whether I daily repeated the mantra given to me by my previous Guru. I replied that every day after my bath and before I began my worship, I repeated the mantra one thousand times. He said, "That is all right. If you will do carefully and attentively what I will tell you, you will soon be successful. Sit in the Padmasana posture and repeat the mantra as long as you can, fixing your mind upon it. If your feet begin to ache, then you should take rest for a short time and then begin again. Do this for eight days, then you will get accustomed to sit in the Padmasana posture." I did so for eight days and I did get to a great extent accustomed to the Padmasana. Then he told me to repeat the mantra in whatever position I liked. The Japa should be continuous till I sleep, but silently without pronouncing the letters by the tongue. I did so for eight days and got accustomed to that also. Then he said, "Now there is no objection to begin the practice of Yoga. Only you should always continue repetition of the Japa in your mind without moving your tongue or lips. We shall begin Yoga practices from tomorrow." Next day when I went to him he said, "Sit in front of me in the Padmasana posture, keeping your body straight in a line. Keep the palms of your hands on your knees and having shut your eyes keep them fixed on the tip of your nose." In this manner he made me sit in front of him twice daily, once in the morning and then in the evening.

After eight or ten days, he said, "Tomorrow you will get the internal light, do not be afraid. You will see spirits and various terrifying Objects of terrible and weird forms, but none will touch your body. Next day he made me sit in front of him as usual and placed his hand on my head. A few minutes later, I saw a big pit appearing before me, which was surrounded by darkness. I felt as if I was entering that pit. Maharaja asked me to come up and open my eyes. He also touched me at one or two parts of my body. I then opened my eyes and told him what I had seen. In the evening of that day I sat again before him and saw that I descended into that pit which was shaped liked a long tunnel, full of darkness, with occasional glimmers of light, succeeded by total darkness. In these glimmers of light I saw big snakes and human forms, terrible in shape, without heads but as if opening their mouths wide to swallow me up. I felt greatly frightened and began to perspire. This scene was going on for about seven days. I used to see occasionally terrifying objects in the tunnel. And every time my fear was increasing. Whenever I was terrified Maharaja used to touch me and asked me to open my eyes. After some time when I became calm he used to say, "Do not be afraid. They would never touch your body. In a few days you will get out of these things." In this manner eight days were required for crossing that tunnel. Maharaja then said that I would never again see the tunnel. I then began to feel that I had come to some good spot full of shining light. Maharaja said, "Now day by day you will

see greater and greater light. Sometimes you will see merely darkness. You must, however, practise twice daily by sitting before me, be writing down what you will see every day." Then for two or three days later, I could see nothing but darkness. Thus suddenly a light began to be seen, which day by day increased so that sunshine appeared to be spreading and I began to feel the heat. Some times, some jungles and some temples (all of Shri Shankar) also were seen. Then for some days nothing could be seen. The practice was, however, continued. Then there was a change in the nature of the light which appeared as cool as moonlight and a sensation of joy and calmness was experienced. Some days later, some black stones appeared near the heart and flames of fire were seen coming out of them. Some days later, a stalk came up from the flames and from it there appeared to be hanging with its mouth downwards something like the flower of the plantain tree. Some days later the flower instead of hanging down turned its face upwards. Maharaja said, "This is the lotus near the heart. You will see it distinctly in a few days and its petals will be opened." The flames then ceased to come out and below the stalk appeared something like water. Then the petals one by one began to open, some up and some down, and a red lotus similar to that which is generally drawn below a picture of the goddess, came in view.

After some days black spots appeared on the petals in which spots, some days later there appeared shapes of letters. I asked Maharaja whether there were actual letters in the spots. He replied that they were the seeds of that lotus and that he would later on take me to the navel lotus. I continued the practice as before and I got the Darshan of various goddesses, some sitting on the lion, some on tigers and some very terrifying in appearance. Then spirits having human shapes appeared and also human beings like ourselves. Maharaja explained that first I saw the various forms of the goddesses, then the spirit world and then the Pitriloka (the world where our dead ancestors live). He also said that I would next see the lotus near the navel.

When I first began this practice Maharaja had told me not in any way to control the breath, and not to give trouble to the body; but only to keep it straight. He had also told me that the deeper and deeper I went inside, my breath would become less and less.

I began then to practise three times daily. After some days I saw the beautiful bed of a river with ghats of white stone built on both sides. There were flowering creepers round about. Many beautiful women dressed in rich clothes had come to bath there and also male persons very bright in appearance. Some towns appeared to be situated on the sides of the river. They were very beautiful and some domes with golden tops were visible. I cannot describe the delight that I felt at the sight of this wonderful arrangement. Maharaja said that that was the Gandharwaloka, the women whom I saw were Apsaras and the males Gandharwas.

Then I proceeded towards the navel lotus. There first appeared terrible flames of fire. Some days later the navel lotus appeared. It was similar to the lotus of the heart but the petals were slightly different. Many days later the

form of Sheshashayi (Vishnu sleeping on the snake) appeared but it was indistinct. From the navel of Vishnu issued forth a lotus plant and Brahmadeva appeared to be sitting on the flower. I asked Maharaja why the whole thing was indistinct to which he replied that by constant practice the things will become distinct. He added, "It is your duty to practise. I shall show you all these places. You must by repeated practice get a secure footing there. Whatever you have seen up to this time will not appear again, you will only see that place where you want to stop. In this way you must get a secure footing at every place, by fixing your attention there."

I continued my practice. Sometimes I could see only darkness and sometimes only light. Sometimes hills, rivers, and mountains also were seen. One day Maharaja said, "Today you will get the Darshan of Shri Ganapati. Sit now and go below the navel." I did so and in a few minutes I saw a light white like the moon-light. In that light appeared a throne and on the throne appeared the form of Shri Ganapati of the size of a man's thumb. He was moving his trunk here and there and His head was covered with uncropped hair like that of a child. Words cannot describe the exquisite beauty and brilliance of that form.

When I left off the meditation I told what I had seen to Maharaja. He had touched my body with a lighted cigarette, while I was absorbed in looking at that form, but I had remained entirely unconscious of it. However, I now felt a burning sensation at the spot. Maharaja said that he had touched my body with the lighted cigarette in order to see whether I had really gone deep in the inner sight and that if I had moved at the hot touch, it would have shown that I had not gone deep.

For a fortnight or a month later I continued the practice. I used to practise at night in my house also but there nothing but light and sometimes darkness was seen. Then once Maharaja said, "I shall show you the Kundalini to-day. In Yoga practice the Kundalini is the most important spot. You sit now and go below Ganapati." I did so and after some time, I saw a triangular pit near the hip-bone, much below Ganapati. Furious flames of fire were darting out of it. I felt a burning sensation in various parts of the body and my whole body was perspiring. I had previously seen flames twice or thrice but they were not so extremely hot as these. Every day this sight continued to appear for some days. Then the flames disappeared and I could clearly make out the triangular pit. Two small pipes close to each other appeared to come out of the pit and go upwards. Between the two pipes there appeared a hollow space of the same size as that of the pipes. Below the pipes there appeared a black snake which had coiled itself round the pipes. Its mouth was hanging downwards. I asked Maharaja about this to which he replied, "The two small pipes are the two nerves Ida and Pingala and the hollow space in the middle is the Sushumna. These three are the main nerves. When we breathe through the nose, we breathe through these serves. The snake which you saw below the pipes is the Kundalini. It is always asleep in the ordinary human body. Its mouth is near the opening of the belly and it always swallows the nectar. When this Kundalini awakes, a man becomes a Yogi. To awaken it a man has to proceed very carefully along the path of Yoga observing many restrictions.

If it is awakened and its mouth is not turned upwards, a man will not live. Hence the person who awakens it must have great power. As this Kundalini proceeds upwards through the Sushumna nerve, the man gets more and more powers. I shall tell about this in detail later on. Let us now go to the two-petalled lotus."

Then Maharaja told me that now I must direct my eye-sight upwards i.e. I must fix it between the tip of the nose and the centre between the eyebrows. This practice then was commenced from that day.

Some days after this, there was Ashadhi Ekadashi (the 11th day of the month of Ashadha, the day of the fair at Pandharpur). At about 5.00 p.m, on that day a shower of "bukka" (black scented powder used specially at Pandharpur) began to fall on the body of Maharaja. Only it could not be seen whence this shower was falling. At that time we were about four persons sitting there. A good quantity of that "bukka" collected on Maharaja's body.

Seeing this miracle we said to Maharaja that the "bukka" was being showered upon his body because it was the Ekadashi day and requested him that we might be given the Darshan of Shri Vithoba. To this he replied, "Others here will not get the Darshan. But since you practise meditation, if you go deep into yourself by the internal sight, Shri Vithoba will become manifest to you." I then immediately sat in a posture. Soon afterwards the temple of Pandharpur appeared. When I entered it I found a great crowd inside. I sat in the crowd and crawled forward when I saw the image of Shri Pandurang. When I got up from this meditation, I described to Maharaja what I had seen. Thereupon he said that as I had placed my head on the feet of Shri Vithoba, there should be "Bukka" on my forehead. The people there also saw "Bukka" on my forehead and I was convinced when a mirror was shown to me. Maharaja after this said that it was the fruit of the meditation so long practised by me. He used to perform, such miracles occasionally.

After some days practice I began to see the two-petalled lotus. When Maharaja asked me to describe it, I said that it had a petal on each side. He said, "That is the Dwidal (two-petalled lotus). It is the place of Guru. Whenever we want the Darshan of our Guru, we should fix our mind there. But let us proceed further. After further practice an eye began to be seen above the forehead. I asked Maharaja about this eye. He said that it was the third eye of Shri Shankar and asked me to proceed further. He added, "I am just showing; these places to you. You must fix your mind at each place and secure it. Without this you will not get the power of that place. The reason why I show you these places is that even if you practise in my absence and your astral body (i.e. mind) goes a little astray, still it would remember this and come back to the proper place. Hence I have shown you all these different paths. Now I am no longer needed. You must continue the study and attain the goal of human life. There will be absolutely no danger to you. Now there is only one place to be shown and that is the Sahasradala (the thousand-petalled lotus). We shall proceed to that place from tomorrow."

Practice was continued from next day. One or two places were seen but not distinctly and hence I cannot describe them. Still I could distinguish "OM" among them.

After leaving "OM" as I proceeded further, something like a majestic temple appeared at a great distance. I think that the thousand-petalled lotus was situated in the interior of that temple as it had innumerable petals difficult to be counted. It was so dazzlingly brilliant that I could not even look at it, by the internal sight. It was, therefore, almost impossible for a novice like me to approach it. I feel that I got this opportunity of having a look at it from a distance only through the grace of Maharaja. The light there was of a bluish colour and extremely lustrous. I required about two or three months to be able to see this. Maharaja then said, "Now I have shown you all the places. You should now continue to practise vigorously without entertaining any fear. There is only one place which I have not shown you. It is Vishuddha Chakra. I have purposely not shown it to you, which will be shown at some other time. Everyday henceforward when you sit for meditation, begin from the heart. There you will see the following different kinds of light. First you will see sunlight. You will be troubled there. After that you will see moonlight and your mind will then enjoy peace and happiness and then you will never feel any trouble even if you wander about for a long time, in the sun. After that you will see flames of fire coming out on all sides, but you will not be troubled in the least by them. Then you will see the blue light, brilliance of which will increase step by step. Then you will get the Darshan of Shri Krishna. If you continue practice and keep seeing the form of Shri Krishna, you will achieve success in Yoga."

Accordingly I continued to practise for some days as directed by Maharaja. Sometimes I saw sun-light, sometimes moonlight and sometimes the blue light. But through my ill-luck or through the force of worldly desires, I left off the study. Five or six years passed in this way and I also could not meet Shri Gajanana Maharaja during those five or six years. Two months ago I got an opportunity of meeting him when I told him what had happened. He said at the time, "Your previous study would not be altogether useless. If you begin practice again and continue it, you will again come to the stage formerly reached by you." On the whole I studied for about three years in the immediate neighbourhood of Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Whatever he taught, he taught by the Royal Road, without imposing any very strict restrictions, without any troubles in the worldly life, and without asking me to leave the worldly life. This is a special knack which he possesses.

I have here given a brief sketch of my experiences. If I had given a description of all things during those three years, it would have provided matter for a big book. Hence I have given only the most important things. I offer my complete submission to Shri Gajanana Maharaja and beg his pardon that I did not make any use of the great Yogic lore he taught to me.

I have to narrate a little of my previous history. I first got myself initiated by Shri Vidyananda Swami Maharaja of Belapur (Dist. Ahmednagar). Just

before he left the world, he told me that there would be an incarnation of his as Narayan Maharaja and that Narayan Maharaja would meet me.

Accordingly I met Shri Narayan Maharaja Kedagaonkar at Arvi and he gave me Darshan in the form of Shri Vidyananda Maharaja and convinced me of his identity with Shri Vidyananda Maharaja. Shri Narayan Maharaja also had made me practise Dhyana Yoga. Then I met Shri Tapkir Buwa of Pandharpur and then Shri Gajanana Maharaja, the practice in whose presence and the experiences obtained in that practice have been described above.

I consider all these things as due to the grace of Shri Vidyananda Maharaja. I got the Darshan of many Saints through his grace alone.

(Sd.) KASHINATHRAO RAMAOHANDRA GANDEKAR.

XXIX

Spiritual Experiences of Mrs. Janakibai Sadashiv Pradhan

I began to feel a keen desire to get initiation from a Sadguru, since I heard in the Puranas and religious discourses that there was no other way of salvation except the grace of a Sadguru. I became very restless and commenced repeating the name of Rama. One day I got a dream in which a Brahmin appeared and said to me that I would soon meet a Sadguru.

Soon after this, I learnt that Shri Gajanana Maharaja had come to Dhulia to the house of Mr. Raje, who was a post-master there. My eldest son was then stopping in the same house. I immediately went to Dhulia and within the period of a week or so got initiation from Shri Gajanana Maharaja.

I began to practise meditation. First of all there was light everywhere. Then a reddish light appeared and in it there was an arch in which big letters were seen; but I could not read them. In that arch there also appeared a Tulsi plant in which there was seen a light and in that light the form of my Guru appeared.

When I directed my attention to the navel, I saw a pit of fire there and the form of some personage. There appeared a brilliant light and in that light the forms of my Guru and of Shri Shankara were seen. I also saw lotuses of light. Shri Shankara appeared absorbed in contemplation. He had a garland of human skulls. Then I saw a blue light in the lotus of the heart. In that light there appeared the form of a personage also of a blue colour. That personage had a crown on his head. He had ear-ornaments having the shape of fishes and he was wearing garlands of flowers. He had a flute upon which he was playing and the sound could be heard distinctly. Then the scene disappeared and a few minutes later a garden appeared full of flowers. Shri Krishna appeared in that garden moving from one tree to another always looking at me playing the game of hide and seek. Then this scene also disappeared and a river of blue colour came in view in the middle of which Shri Krishna again

appeared. A road lined on both sides with trees could be seen. There were also small shrubs by the side of this road.

The pit of fire near the navel was very deep and the flames reached the region of the heart. The same form of Shri Krishna appeared again but the colour was changed. Whenever this form of Shri Krishna appeared in the heart, it transformed itself into the form of my Guru. This form of my Guru also assumed different disguises and dresses. Sometimes it appeared with a beard, sometime with only a shirt. This scene also disappeared. Then an arch of flowers came in view in which there was a lotus and in the lotus there was Shri Krishna whose hands and lips appeared to be moving.

I received initiation in 1926. At present I am about 65 years old.

9-7-1939

(Sd.) JANAKIBAI SADASHIVA PRADHAN.

Note : Mrs. Pradhan left her mortal body at Nasik Road in the house of her brother Dr. Kharkar in November 1939.

She was ill for about a month, losing her strength day by day. Three days before her death she called her youngest daughter, aged about seventeen, and gave her five rupees to be taken to Gajanana Maharaja for the fulfilment of her desire to feed some Brahmins.

On the day of her departure she was muttering the name of Gajanana Maharaja and the Mantra "Soham". She also was muttering slowly, "Arrange the plantain leaves for feeding the Brahmins and serve them with five sweet dishes". She breathed her last with the Mantra Soham on her lips. The people there for the next three days smelt the fragrant smell of different attars, Tulasi plant and sweet dishes such as Shrikhand etc. etc., in the room where her death occurred.

XXX

Spiritual Experiences of Mr. Shankar Keshav Phansalkar

In 1925 when I was at Belgaum, Shri Guru Kulkarni Maharaja initiated me and ordered me to repeat the Japa keeping my eye-sight fixed on the tip of the nose and my attention on the letting out and taking in of breath. From 1925 to 1932 I was staying at Belgaum and every year when Shri Kulkarni Maharaja visited Belgaum, I used to go for his Darshan. In 1933 I went to Poona and thence in March 1934 I came to Nasik. From 1925 to 1930, I used to repeat the Japa with a rosary of beads in my hand having fixed my attention on the in-coming and out-going breath. From 1931 it came to pass that the rosary used to fall down unknowingly from my hand and then a choking sensation used to succeed, accompanied with a sensation of fear. This continued to the end of 1931. From 1932 to 1934, till I came to Nasik, there was no experience worth mentioning.

After I came to Nasik I continued the practice notwithstanding the choking sensation. Some time later I narrated my experiences to Mr. Vishupant Kulkarni, Deputy Accountant, who was my neighbour and asked him whether he knew of any saint who would drive away this choking sensation and lead me further on the spiritual path. He said that there was one Maharaja at Nasik and that his friend Mr. Appasaheb Vaidya who was a disciple of that Maharaja would take me to him. I accordingly saw Mr. Vaidya and went with him to Shri Gajanana Maharaja who made inquiries with me and asked me to continue the Japa given to me by Shri Kulkarni Maharaja. Successively for two or three days he made me sit in front of him for practice. On the very first day the sensation of fear disappeared and my mind was turned inwards and later on I saw visions and at present I am enjoying great joy.

When in 1931 I began to feel the sensation of fear, I had written about it to Shri Kulkarni Maharaja who, however, simply asked me to continue the Japa. At some time from 1932 to 1934 a gentleman told me to practise Shanmukhi Mudra. Owing to this, sounds began to be heard in the ear and some sounds again caused a sensation of fear. In this state I came to Nasik in March 1934. At that time the Japa which had been told to me by Shri Kulkarni Maharaja used to go on as soon as my attention was directed towards it. If I purposely sat for repeating the Japa, breath used to stop and I used to feel a choking sensation and fear. I first took Shri Gajanana Maharajas Darshan on 21st July 1934 and he conferred his grace upon me. I first saw in vision various human beings, letters, different kinds of colours, stars and flashes of lightning. This continued for about six months. Then I could see the sea, rivers, hills and temples simultaneously. Then one of these visions would appear, remain steady for some time and then disappear. After that I saw assemblages of saints, some of whom were sitting, some standing, some moving about and some engaged in the practice of Yoga. The mind began slowly to lose its fickleness and to gain in calmness. The visions of these various scenes, then stopped. The darkness appeared, succeeded by a dark and bluish light and all the above mentioned saints began to appear one after another in that light. The mind felt a sense of joy in that light and hence a desire to sit in meditation as long as possible was generated. I never before had felt such a sense of joy. Sometimes I heard sounds of small bells and sometimes of big ones. At present the sound of big bells is constant. All other visions have vanished now. I only see a flame of the size of a man's thumb and while looking at it, I become unconscious of my body. All these experiences have been felt between 21st July 1934 and 29th November 1936.

(Sd.) S. K. PHANSALKAR.

It was the month of September 1938. I then read the book entitled "The Great Design". I had previously read Jnaneshwari, and the works of Vivekananda and other books dealing with religious and spiritual topics. There was a keen longing in my heart for experiencing the presence of God. Some peculiar things also began to happen at that time. While talking with my intimate friends on such topics, whenever I got entirely engrossed in the subject, my face appeared to my friends enveloped by a halo of thin fog-like dim light. Once or twice my friend Mr. Vamanrao Deshpande mentioned about this. He at the same time looked at one or two other friends who were then sitting there but he could not see anything of the kind round their faces.

One day while I was sitting in an absorbed state of thinking one of my students named Gopalsing Pardeshi had come to see me at my place at night. All the windows of the room had been shut as a keen wind was blowing then. While I was talking with him, I was seeing all along clouds of dim light on all sides. He said, "Sir, even now what beautiful moonlight is there !".

Some days later, it might be a day or two before the Kojagiri Pournima, I was sitting in a state of absorption and was trying to turn my sight inwards and to take my consciousness upwards. You may call it a hallucination or by any other name but whenever my sight and consciousness became fixed on a high centre, I could see a brilliant light in my head. The light was so brilliant that I cannot describe it in words.

On the Kojagiri day I again tried the same thing and found that blood began to flow through all the arteries rapidly up towards the head and down towards the feet. Intermittently the arteries became swollen. I got greatly frightened and thought that I had ruined my life by indulging in these foolish attempts. I passed two days in a very serious condition. I felt very great bodily weakness. Only my mind had not become absolutely hopeless. The well-known words in the Bhagwat Gita, "My devotee shall never perish" were constantly remembered and they gave great support to the mind.

I soon got over this deplorable condition and began to perform my daily duties as usual. On the Bhau-Bij day in Diwali I went to the house of a lady whom I regarded as my sister and was sitting on a swinging board there. Although outwardly I was talking with the persons there, my mind was internally engaged in the contemplation of something quite different. I was thinking about the truth of the statement that God is present everywhere. I felt as if my body became separated from me and fell away. My mind was at that time centred at one point viz., at the back of the top of the head. I felt that my body had become extremely light and I was merely conscious of the workings of my intellect. Whenever I talked or there was any other working of my mind it appeared as if after one action had been completed, another working began. Any sound which fell on my ears from outside, such as the sounds of conversation or the sound of a gramophone which was there, produced

vibrations in some part of my body. A short time later my mind became more and more internally absorbed and I got a strange experience.

At that time rain began to fall and there were flashes of lightning in the outside world. But I was actually seeing the form of Lord Shri Krishna internally on the side of my back. I saw a vast ocean and from behind Shri Krishna a big snake had spread his hood over him. This internal appearance then began to be perceived outwardly also. Wherever I cast my eyes I actually saw whatever passed in my mind. Whenever my mind thought about some Saint or some Deity, that very Saint or Deity appeared before my actual sight. Similarly there was an extraordinary similarity between the ideas contained in the song on the gramophone and the visions which I was seeing with my eyes. I then experienced a wonderful joy in this combination of vibrations in the body, external sounds, visions of lights, thoughts in the mind and their immediate exemplification in actual sight. That whole day I passed in an overwhelming sense of rapture. But from the next day there was a sudden reverse. Only bad thoughts entered the mind. My brain became confused and meddled and excited. I thought some one had exercised his evil power over me. Because whenever I looked at anybody either in the house or while going by the road, that person appeared to be strangely affected by my attention being directed towards him. I was all along marking this strange phenomenon and hence I thought that if by my own actions had brought this trouble on myself. I must have unconsciously interfered with the workings of some person having evil powers and he was therefore taking his revenge in this way. He was exercising his evil powers upon me and taking away my strength of mind. I felt that I was entirely without the support of any human being and had begun to pray incessantly to God.

At this time I happened to read some typed papers concerning Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I, thereupon, thought that I should try and see if going to him would be of any use to me. My friend Mr. Vamanrao Deshpande was with me when I went to Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I, however, got no favourable impression about Maharaja in the beginning. Mr. Deshpande also entertained the same opinion. Still I kept on going to him. Maharaja tried many times to give me consolation and solace in the ordinary worldly way. Then I read the spiritual experiences of some of Maharajas disciples. My curiosity was aroused and I requested Maharaja to confer his grace upon me. He then gave me the "Soham" mantra. While engaged in the repetition of that "Soham" I began to experience that my mind was gaining in steadiness. All sense of fear vanished.

At present I daily go for my Sadguru's Darshan. My mind remains detached even though there might be troubles and difficulties in my worldly life. All along I am continuously carrying on the repetition of "Soham". Sadguru Gajanana Maharaja has, in his infinite mercy taken me under his protection and made me a follower of the Nath Pantha and has thus made me, who was Anatha (helpless), Sanatha (follower of Natha). I, who was formerly full of misery and pain, am now enjoying such a great bliss that no words of tongue or pen can give an adequate description of it.

(Sd.) DATTATREYA KESHAV BHAT,
(Poet Ashoka)

Spiritual experiences of Kashinath Bhimaji Suryawanshi,
a barber, staying at Nasik.

One day in December 1938 I had been to Raoasheb Pradhan of the Income-Tax Department for cutting his hair. While I was cutting his hair I saw him going into a trance-like state. I continued cutting his hair and finished doing so while he was in that state. I had still to shave his beard. Afraid of disturbing him, I stopped for about half-an-hour. When he came back to the state of normal consciousness, he asked me when I had finished the cutting of hair and why I had not shaved his beard. I told him that as he had become absorbed in love (Prema) I did not like to commit the sin of causing him disturbance. He then asked what I meant by love. I quoted a line from Shri Eknath Maharajas well-known Abhanga viz., "Having fixed one's mind by practising the fifth kind of mudra, one actually sees Hari (God) with one's own eyes" and told him that I saw him merged in this love of God.

He then said to me that he would take me to his Sadguru Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Some days later when I had been to Raosaheb Pradhan again at about 9 or 10 a.m. he told me that he would take me for Shri Gupte Maharajas Darshan at about 5 or 5-30 p.m. the same day. I, therefore, again went to his house at about 5 p.m., but he was not at home. His wife handed over to me some papers which Raosaheb Pradhan had forgotten to take with him and gave me the exact address of a particular house and asked me to go there. I went to that house which was the house where Shri Gajanana Maharaja dwelt and kept the papers before Maharaja. He asked me whose papers they were. I told him that they were Raosaheb Pradhans papers and that I had missed meeting him and hence I had brought the papers. Maharaja then asked me to wait. Soon after this, Raosaheb Pradhan came there and said to Maharaja, "This is my barber. He has a liking for reading religious books and for Bhajana and hence he has come for your Darshan."

Upon this Maharaja did not say anything but remained quiet. A short time later I went into a trance-like state while I was sitting there. Some time later Raosaheb Pradhan and myself started to go back. On the way I asked Raosaheb Pradhan why I had felt that trance-like state there. He replied that I was extremely fortunate. I then went home and opened Shri Dasabodha for the purpose of reading it. I, however, could not proceed to read it. I became entirely absorbed in a trance and did not know where I was.

Next day I narrated what had happened to Raosaheb Pradhan who told me to go again that day to Maharaja who would give me the necessary explanation. I did so and Maharaja asked me to go to him the next day at about eleven or twelve in the morning. While going home I felt the sensation of trance similar to that of the day before. I again went to Maharaja at about 11 a.m. on the next day. Maharaja then asked me what I wanted. I said that I wanted his Darshan. He said that I had got his Darshan and therefore should go away. I again asked him the reason why I had been called by him on that day. He said that he had wished to know what I wanted. I said I wanted to get

the knowledge of self. Maharaja said, "You will get it." From that day I began continually to go into a trance like state and could not properly perform worship or Bhajan.

Then I got the internal sight and could see the complete form of Shri Vishnu in my heart. I was then altogether unconscious of my body. This continued for about three or four days. I used to go for Maharajas Darshan every day. Seven or eight days later Maharaja gave me a Mantra. Some days later I got the following experience :

While I was reading Guru-Sishya Vijnana Deepika in the afternoon, I felt the sensation of a trance. I then went and sat in the Devaghara (the apartment where household gods are kept). I saw the following vision while I was in the trance-like state. It appeared that Maharaja took me somewhere into a deep valley where I saw a big Pindi of Shri Shankara. I stood there in silence for some time when I saw big mountains near the Pindi and a big current of water flowing through the mountains. It appeared that this current came down from the sky and when it fell down on the ground the water again rose up like a fountain. Then Maharaja took me by a different road. There I saw a big cellar. I entered it and saw a Yogi sitting there near a Samadhi. I took the Darshan of the Yogi as well as of the Samadhi. The state of trance then disappeared and when I came back to ordinary consciousness I found myself lying down with my face downwards.

This vision was seen on Thursday at about 3 or 3-30 p. m. I was extremely delighted and told this experience to Maharaja the same day. Then I began to repeat the mantra given by Maharaja continuously.

A few days latter again on a Thursday I got the following peculiar experience :-

In the afternoon I was lying down having covered my whole body with a chadar. I saw some saint coming near me who began. to press my hands, feet and the whole body. I tried to remove the chadar from my face but he prevented me from doing so and said, "You have dome great exertions and you are tired. Simply lie down repeating 'Jaya Guru Mauli'." All this happened when I was quite awake mind fully conscious of the everyday world. I was not then in a sleepy state nor was then in a trance. Then I removed the covering and found that there was no one near me. On that day I had to go out of Nasik. I therefore took my travelling kit and went to Maharaja and told him what had happened. He asked me, "Are you sure that it was not I?" I replied, "I cannot say. I am sure that it was some saint. I could only see his feet below the knees but could not see his face." Maharaja then said that I had practised Yoga in my previous life.

Then I left Nasik and remained away at Karanji in Dindora Taluka, Nasik District for about a fortnight. I kept up my daily practice at Karanji also. Some days after I returned to Nasik when I sat for meditation I began to feel a suffocating sensation and my body used to move suddenly. Sometimes I fell with my face downwards, sometimes with my face upwards, sometimes I fell

towards the right and sometimes towards the left side. I, however, continued the practice. I then some days later saw a big disc.

One day I began to feel some pain in the navel region, as if caused by that region being drawn somewhere. Some days later while I was sitting in meditation I saw a big pipe, and got the Darshana of Shri Gajanana or Ganapati and of Shri Shankara. I got the Darshana of Shri Brahmadeva near the navel lotus and of Shri Sheshashayi near the heart-lotus. Shri Lakshmi was pressing the feet of Shri Vishnu over whom Shesha had spread his hood. There was a big round mountain on the head of the Shesha. From the navel of Shri Vishnu a btus with a long stalk grew upwards and Shri Brahmadeva was sitting on that lotus. There was a big sea at his feet. A few days later while I was in a sleepy state I saw a white string and an ant crawling upon it.

Then some days later I got the Darshana of Shri Maruti, Shri Rama, Dhruva, Shri Shankara and of Shri Ramdas. The passage of the Sushumna then became open and a sensation of pain was felt in the back and waist. In meditation I got entangled in one plexus and could not find my way but when I meditated upon Maharaja the way became manifest. I saw many discs and balls of various colours, golden etc. I saw a triangular shaped region in a ball and there appeared a long road. This vision continued for about three or four days. I then began to feel a sensation of great tremor in the whole body. When, however, I meditated upon Shri Maharaja, the sensation used to pass away. This continued for about a fortnight.

I then began to see a vast expanse of water. Then I began to feel pain just a little back of the top of the head and saw many lotuses there, some full-blown and some in the form of buds, some of which were red while others were yellow in colour. Sometimes I saw extensive gardens and sometimes mountains of deep yellow colour. This was succeeded by light of golden colour. Then I began to feel a sensation of pain near the centre of the head and began to hear the sound of "Soham", sometimes in the ears and sometimes in the chest. Then I saw the letter "OM" of a very small size at the centre between the eye-brows.

After this I fell ill and felt I was protected by Maharaja in that illness. In that illness I saw a big river and Maharaja took me safely across it. Beyond the river there was a terrible forest and high rocks. In the rocks there was a hollow. Maharaja took me up by the side of the hollow and led me safely to the top.

In the convalescent state I went to Chandori, where I did not continue the practice of meditation daily but did it off and on. When my health became better I returned to Nasik and went to Maharajas Darshana. At present I see a clear light of the colour of the sky and I many a time get merged in it. I see a small white disc at the centre between the eye-brows and feel as if my whole body is being drawn towards the head. I feel that I am entirely under the guidance and protection of my Sadguru who is my mother and the mother knows what is for the good of the child, for, her love is entirely disinterested. I

have placed myself in my Gurus hands. He is my stay and support and the whole responsibility rests on him.

21-2-1940.

(Sd.) KASHINATH BHIMAJI SURYAWANSHI

XXXIII

Spiritual Experiences of Mr. Dagdu Dhako Sonar Dusane of Dhulia.

I had the good fortune to meet the great Yogi Shri Gajanana Maharaja Gupte at Dhulia and he initiated me into the path of Raja Yoga in a very short times. I am at present about 63 years old and it is rather difficult for me to give a consistent and detailed description of my experiences. I had been to Nasik on the 23rd June 1939 for Shri Maharajas Darshan, and being ordered by him to write out my experiences, I have tried to do so.

I began to repeat the mantra "Soham" with my eyes shut. In a few minutes the darkness disappeared, and I got the Darshan of Shri Shankar in a clear light. While I was sleeping at night, I heard the sound of cannons suddenly so loud that my ears were deafened. When the Japa had been continued for some days, the curtains of the ears as it were appeared to have been removed and the doors, like those of a house, were as if opened. Some days later Maharaja told me to practise by means of sight (having told me about the internal sight), breath and the mind. In this practice when I shut my eyes there was first of all dense darkness. I then began to look downwards. I saw a big pipe like a cave or an underground cellar. For some days I felt as if I descended into this pipe or cellar. While moving through this cellar I saw various trees, forests, mountain passes, rivers etc. A big lake was seen, which I crossed with great difficulty but ultimately succeeded in reaching its other side. There I saw a well of a triangular shape where I got the Darshan of Shri Ganapati. On my return way I saw three rivers, two of which were throwing out flames. One of them, which did not throw out flames was the nerve known as Sushumna.

Some days passed in this state and then I began to feel as if I was losing the balance of my mind and sanity. However, relying on Shri Gurus grace I proceeded further.

While going downwards the attention of the internal sight was directed towards the navel region. There Shri Vishnu was seen lying down on the Shesha and Shri Lakshmi was seen pressing his feet. In a short time a statue came up from the navel of Shri Vishnu, having five faces. He was Brahmadeva. After practice of some more days, a lotus of red colour began to appear in the heart and Shri Vishnu or Shri Lakshmi was seen in the lotus. After some more practice I entered into the interior of the lotus, when I could see the world of Indra. I there saw in the Durbar of Indra, Indra himself, the moon, dancing Gandharwas, and the hall seemed to be filled with different deities. I further saw Chitra Guptas, Yama, several Rishis, Kubera, the Pitris, the Nine Planets, and Brahmadeva, Vishnu and Shiva. Then there appeared

the blue sky, a blue wheel and then there was nothing but blue colour everywhere.

After some days more I saw all the ten incarnations of Vishnu. I saw Shri Krishna sporting with several milkmaids, in company of his boy-companions, Pendya, Sudama and others. I saw also Balarama. I saw rain everywhere and Shri Krishna plunging into the Jumna and coming out after having killed the serpent Kaliya and delighting his friends. Then I saw the Buddha incarnation. Then again Shri Vishnu was seen on the lotus in the heart. And I began losing consciousness of my body. In the lotus at the throat I saw Shri Guru Datta and my mind became absorbed and as I went deeper I saw Shri Gajanana Maharaja and in front of him Shri Datta. The "Soham" Japa was going on internally. Shri Gajanana Maharaja had told me that there was no objection to carry on worldly transactions but internally attention must be fixed on the Japa. I then commenced sitting in the Padmasana posture while meditating. I used to fix my attention on the tip of the nose. There appeared a dense darkness but when I went deeper, there appeared the light of the morning. Then I saw the moon and then appeared the letter OM in a golden colour. I tried to go deeper but darkness intervened and I lost consciousness.

Later on I saw also the Sahasradala lotus. On all sides there were the plumages of peacocks. An eye of different colours appeared. Then the current of thoughts stopped altogether and I forgot myself.

Written at Naisik on 23rd June 1939.

(Sd.) DAGDU DHAKU SONAR DUSANE.

XXXIV

Extracts from a letter written by Mr. Choukkar from Baroda to Shri Gajanana Maharaja.

Baroda, Friday, 5-5-30.

Many salutations to the feet of Shri Guru Maharaja.

I am continuing to repeat the Japa as ordered by you. It appears, however, that further progress has stopped. You alone know the reason. Various miracles occur. I get your Darshan, just as if I am actually seeing you in the physical body. I wish that this Darshan should be continuous. You alone can fulfil this desire.

On the last new-moon day, as I could not get sleep, at about midnight I lay down repeating the Japa. A very strong smell began to spread. While I was thinking about the source of such a smell at such a place and time, a terrible darkness appeared before me. A whitish light mixed with red light

began to be seen in that darkness. In a short time some terrible beings of dark colour with weird weapons in their hands came near me, as if wanting to attack me. I was afraid that some terrible thing would happen, when your lame form, extremely lustrous, having eyes burning like live charcoal, appeared with a big stick in your hand, which stick appeared as if it was made of fire. On seeing you those terrible beings became full of panic and began to run away, some of them fell down, their feet being entangled into each others and ultimately all of them disappeared. After that I heard you say, "Why are you so kind ? Why do you show mercy to such wicked beings ?" I replied, "Maharaja, you yourself taught me to be merciful." Upon this, Maharaja, you laughed loudly and then disappeared.

I am absolutely sure that this was not a dream and I was not then sleeping. Kindly send me an explanation of this vision.

One day when I was in the office at noon alone, I began to repeat the Japa with concentration. A fragrant smell spread everywhere and I became unconscious of external surroundings. You came to me and having held me by your hand, took me to various charming places and showed me the sports of Shri Krishna as described in the Puranas. I cannot adequately describe the scenes. I heard the following words uttered by you, "Dada Saheb, you should again become a worldly man." I then immediately came to my senses and found myself sitting in the office. Since that day further progress appears to be stopped and I feel as if I am again and again tearing the same words repeated.

On the night of this new years day (Chaitra Shuddha Prati-pada), as I could not get sleep, I was sitting on the swinging coach repenting the Japa. A few minutes after I had begun the Japa, I could see before me the scene of the temple of Maruti situated at Shri Nilkantheshwar; but the image, instead of being that of Maruti, was of your lame self. I worshipped you fully and began to turn round the image. While doing so I observed that the image sometimes appeared to be yours and immediately afterwards it appeared to be that of Maruti. I, however, continued turning round. Soon afterwards Mr. Gajannnrao Kharshikar came there with his daughter who had all the materials of worship in her hands. He also worshipped you. I was all the while turning round and he after completing his worship was standing at some distance. His daughter then began turning round following in my wake. In a short time a young monkey appeared near the image and you (i.e. Maharaja) went and stood near Mr. Kharsikar. The monkey came out of the inner temple and jumped upon the body of the girl. When I looked back, the monkey jumped upon me and then it jumped upon Mr. Kharshikar. It thus continued jumping, while you were standing there laughing continuously, Mr. Kharshikar was also laughing. Some time later the scene disappeared and having come to my senses I found that I was sitting on my swinging coach.

Thus there are these wonderful visions but I cannot understand their meaning. Further progress appears to be stopped. Days are rapidly passing. What should I do? I am nearly losing my patience. Oh, Maharaja, how long are you going to test this poor soul ?

If I would describe these visions to anybody else, he would consider me mad. You, too, might consider me foolish. Call me anything but please explain the meaning of all this. Please send a reply as soon as you can.

Yours,
(Sd.) CHOUKKAR.

XXXV

Spiritual Experiences of Mr. G. D. Mandavgane and his
wife Godavaribai.

About a month ago, in a casual talk with Mr. P. L. Inamdar a dealer in ghee, I learnt about Shri Gajanana Maharaja. Mr. Inamdar told me that Shri Gajanana Maharaja was a Saint worthy of being a Guru. Soon after getting initiation from him, a person gets spiritual experiences and real peace of mind and his faith, therefore, naturally becomes firmly fixed. This aroused a curiosity in the mind of my wife as well as in mine to go and see him personally. We both, therefore, began to go for Maharajas Darshan.

Eight or ten days later, on 23rd July 1940, we both decided to get ourselves initiated by Maharaja and preferred our humble request to him. Maharaja told us that he would confer his grace on us on Thursday, 25th July 1940. On that day at about 8-30 a.m. we both went to Maharaja's place, and he initiated us. About twelve days have passed since then. Both of us repeat the Japa according to his instructions. For the last four days my wife easily and naturally goes into the state of Samadhi, although she sees no visions. She remains in this state for 30 to 40 minutes. Even if the child is then sucking, she is absolutely unconscious of all external surroundings and comes to ordinary consciousness, only when the internal feeling of bliss subsides. She goes into such a state as soon as she feels an inclination to repeat "Soham".

I, however, when sitting in meditation, see various visions, such as waves of water, white clouds, the sky, the flame, Sudarshana Chakra, etc. These experiences have firmly convinced me that Shri Gajanana Maharaja possesses some wonderful power and I have, therefore, resolved to carry on the Japa according to his instructions.

I am a retired Sub-Inspector of Police. Owing to my long service in the Police Department and the angle of vision acquired there, I never had any faith in Maharajas and Saints. But somehow or other, when I went for Maharajas Darshan, even on the very first day, this my usual tendency to look suspiciously at Saints, automatically vanished.

Actual experiences then followed and they were obtained in a very short time. Then all doubts naturally disappeared from my mind and now I am

thoroughly convinced that Maharaja is a real Saint. I think that such Saints are very few in this world.

5th August 1940.

(Sd.) G. D. MANDAVGANE,
Retired Sub-Inspector of Police, Nasik.

XXXVI

Mr. Kurdukar Vaidya's Account

Mr. Kurdukar Vaidya having dispensaries at Nasik and Sangamner, happened to go to Maharaja for Darshana in the month of April 1940. An account of the conversation which then took place and of the spiritual experiences which Mr. Kurdukar got has been given below in his own words.]

The following conversation took place when I went for the Darshana of Maharaja : -

Maharaja : - What is your name and why have you come to see me ?

Myself: - My name is Krishnarao and my surname is Kurdukar. I am a Vaidya and for the last seven or eight years I have been practising as a Vaidya from altruistic as well as interested motives.

Maharaja : - Who told you that I am a Maharaja ?

Myself : - Mr. Pundit, retired Mamlatdar, first gave me information regarding you. I wanted to come to you for Darshana but somehow or other I could not do so upto this time. I then met Madhukar Chitnis who also gave me information about you. I knew that Madhukar Chitnis was practising Yoga and hence I was greatly delighted at the information given by him. I thought that perhaps I too might be graced by you. With this idea I have come to you,

Maharaja :- I am a poor cripple. You have practised Yoga for a long time and have made great progress. You have also been initiated by a great Saint. I, therefore, consider myself as lucky in having obtained your Darshana. Well, how long are you going to stop at Nasik ?

Myself:- I am here for two days more. I shall then go to Sangamner. I have private dispensaries at Nasik and Sangamner. I visit Nasik every fortnight or so. I shall give you in writing a brief account of my life from my childhood.

When this conversation took place there were five or six persons sitting near Maharaja. Mr. Nirokhekar, Law Instructor at the Police Training School Nasik, was among them. Maharaja then asked me to give him a short sketch of my previous practice of Yoga. I told him what practices in Hatha Yoga had been done by me and how later on after practice for 3 years I had to leave it off owing to a feeling of fear which was generated, how I had gone to various Saints with the hope that they would guide me further and how ultimately I opened dispensaries at Nasik and Sangamner. I then bowed to the feet of Maharaja and left his house.

On the third day after that I had been to see some people staying in the locality near Maharaja's House and after the visits were over I had gone a pretty long distance on the side opposite to Maharajas house. At that time I had no idea of going to Maharaja or of asking him about Yoga but somehow or other my feet began as it were to be drawn back and for two or three minutes I went backwards. Then an idea struck me that I should go for Maharajas Darshana. It was about 9-30 in the morning then. I fell at his feet. He asked me, "Why have you come?" I replied that I had gone there for his Darshana.

Maharaja :- All right. I suppose you have no particular object in seeing me.

Myself:- Yes. I have a particular object in coming here. Since you have as it were forcibly dragged me here, there must be object is it. Kindly fulfil that object.

Maharaja :- I am neither a Buwa nor a Hatha-Yogi. I have no power of knowing what is in your mind. I consider myself as fortunate in having your Darshana. Please do not think that I am indulging in a bit of exaggeration.

Myself:- I have tried various things and I am now absolutely tired. The restlessness of my mind, however, has not abated. I have left off the practice of Yoga for the last so many years. It is in your hands to guide me further on the right path.

Maharaja :- All right. I shall tell you through the grace of my Guru.

Maharaja then asked me to sit in a particular posture. I sat in the Siddha-Padmasana posture. Maharaja then told me to repeat "Soham". As soon as I did so, my mind instantaneously turned inwards and became absolutely calm. All the bad effects of my old practices of Hatha Yoga disappeared. The breath which had been going astray, straight entered the Sushumna and reached the Brahmarandhra. Since then I feel no trouble and am enjoying great joy.

I give below a short history of my previous life and Yoga practices, closing it with a brief description of the progress made upto 26th May 1940, since I was initiated by Maharaja.

I was born in a well-to-do Brahmin family. From my childhood I had a liking for higher education, mainly sports, writing, reading and religious and spiritual matters. I used to take a prominent part in works of public utility, national activities, libraries, religious institutions and festivals in honour of national heroes, incarnations of God and of Saints. I had always an ambition to stand first in indoor studies as well as in outdoor games and it was in most cases satisfied. At the age of about fifteen or sixteen I began to reflect about the aims and objects of human life in general and about the difficulties that are met with when carrying out any work of public utility and came to the conclusion that a person must first of all attain a high spiritual elevation before engaging himself in any activity for serving his country for uplift of his fellowmen. I then began to seek for a way to obtain this spiritual elevation,

Following the custom of well-to-do families of the time, my parents had got me married when I was only thirteen years old and the responsibilities of a house holder fell upon me at the age of 17 or 18. As, however, my attention was powerfully attracted towards reading spiritual books, listening to religious discourses, keeping company with saintly persons, observing religious practices and rituals and Yoga, I became very indifferent to and had a sort of disgust for worldly transactions. I became restless and began to pray day and night that I might meet with a Sadguru or Saint who would show me the proper path of realising the existence and presence of God. This restlessness and anxiety increased by leaps and bounds and with a desire to leave off all connection with relatives, friends, wife and acquaintances and with a desire to visit places of pilgrimage in the hope of meeting with a real Saint, I left my home in the 18th year of my life. Naturally my higher education from the worldly point of view came to an end.

Seven or eight years after that were passed in visiting places of pilgrimage, in repeating mantras and in Yoga practices. Soon after leaving my house I had come in close contact with a Hatha Yogi named Keshav Bhagwant Mokashi. I became his disciple and began to practise Hatha-Yoga according to his instructions. I devoted myself solely to the practice of Hatha-Yoga for three years, from 1912 to 1915. For three months by slowly decreasing the quantity of food, I began to take only one seer of cows milk in the whole day. This continued for 6 months. Then I left off milk and began to take syrup of dried grapes (i.e. water mixed with a little pulp of dried grapes), which continued for three months more. After that for 108 days I remained merely on one seer of water, purified by being passed through folds of cloth. My weight at the end of those 108 days was only 48 lbs. When I had first started decreasing the quantity of food, my weight was 96 lbs. At this time, i.e. at the end of those 108 days, I was a mere skeleton. Owing to want of blood, the colour of my body was very pale, still there was a sort of lustre belying the dearth of blood. If I raised my arm, the whole blood would run down towards the arm-pit and the whole arm would appear absolutely pale and bloodless. When again the arm was lowered the fingers and the palm of the hand

became so red that it would appear as if blood was dropping down from them. I was then at Indore and Dr. Bhandarkar was Civil Surgeon there. I got myself thoroughly examined by him. He said that although the beats of my pulse were only 40 to 42 per minute, still they were strong and consistent and in strength resembled the beats of a soldier in the military. The heart and the lungs were functioning properly. Although I had left off food altogether and was remaining merely on water and that too reduced to only one seer, still there was no adverse effect in my body. I was full of a buoyant spirit and although I was doing bodily exertions according to my strength I never felt exhausted. Such an instance is extremely rare in the history of Yoga practices.

I used to sit three hours at a time in the three postures, viz., Siddhasana, Padmasana and Baddha Padmasana and in this manner during the whole day I passed eighteen hours sitting in these postures. I never felt any necessity of rest. I never got any sleep. Still I never suffered from any ailment nor did I feel any the slightest decrease in my energy. On the contrary I was full of buoyancy and enthusiasm. Although at this time my physical body had become very lean and flesh and blood had dried up, still the powers of my organs of knowledge were increased in keenness. My eyes had a peculiar lustre and I could see things clearly at a distance double that at which a boy of ten or twelve years having very clear eyesight could see. When at night I used to lie down in a closed room having covered myself over with a blanket, I could distinctly hear the talk carried on in ordinary tones at a distance of half-a-furlong and this keenness of hearing was there notwithstanding that I was originally rather short of hearing. The powers of taste were so enhanced that I found the taste of water very, sweet. The powers of smelling were increased to such an extent that I could very keenly feel the smell of any dirty or sweet smelling thing lying at a distance of about three houses, when ordinary persons were not aware of the smell at all. If any one came near me, the smell of his body became unbearable to me. The internal parts of the body had become so pure and refined that if one drop of rose-water was mixed in my drinking water, even my urine smelt of rose. The transparency of my skin was also vastly increased. If the skin of my thigh was drawn, it could be drawn to the length of about a span and a lamp or the fingers of the hand on the other side could be clearly seen through the skin. I could also get other experiences described in the Yoga-Shastra.

During the three and half months when I lived only on water, there was no desire to pass stools for eight or ten days at a time and then too there was merely the passing off of gases. Only urination was regular. Every day I got the experiences of a sensation of very great joy, a feeling of great bodily strength, a perception of the purity of arteries, and of visions of different kinds of light of colours, of the stars, the sun and the moon and of lightning, etc. I also felt that my body had become very light and subtle. When I used to sit in a posture for meditation, my whole body left the seat and was lifted up to a height of a cubit or a cubit and a half and owing to the control of breath inside, sometimes my body as it were took a jump and fell at a distance of four or five cubits. Sometimes for five or six minutes my body went up and came down

like a ball. Even when I was lying down on my back, my whole body from the head to the toes went up and down.

But after this owing to adverse circumstances, I had to stop further practice. Wishing to come back to ordinary worldly life, I started taking milk. After passing one year on milk, I began to take rice. On the day on which I began to take rice my weight was 96 lbs. i.e. my normal weight. According to the orders of my Guru (Mokashi), I studied Ayurveda and began to practise as a Vaidya from 1917 mainly with the idea of helping and serving my Guru. This practice is still being carried on with the twofold object of getting my own livelihood and of helping my Guru. But the thirst of obtaining spiritual eminence remained unappeased and increased every day. With the object of coming in contact with Saints and Yogis I went to places of pilgrimage and travelled a good deal but very rarely met with a straightforward person with no trace of hypocrisy about him. Real Yogis of high attainments whom I met were so few that they could hardly be counted on one's fingers.

For some time I had the good fortune of enjoying the company of Shri Vasudevananda Saraswati, a Saint well known in Maharashtra. He helped me a good deal and guided me further on the Yoga Path. Even after he left his mortal coil, he has been guiding me by appearing in my dreams. The latest instance of this is that he expressed his approval about the Dhyana Yoga so kindly told me by Shri Gajanana Maharaja. I came in contact with some other real Saints also, who gave me some helpful directions. But with all this a feeling of dissatisfaction still persisted as I felt that I was far away from the goal. This feeling of dissatisfaction disappeared after I came in contact with Shri Gajanana Maharaja when he conferred his grace upon me on Thursday, Chaitra Shuddha Ekadashi. Since then I began to feel a sort of internal calm and steadiness.

On the Rama Navami of this year I got the Darshana of Shri Gajanana Maharaja and a desire was generated in my mind that he should kindly bless me and take me under his guidance. On Chaitra Shuddha Ekadashi i.e. two days after that, my feet unwillingly were directed towards his house and at 9 a.m. on that day Shri Gajanana Maharaja explained to me how to practise meditation. At that time for about 10 or 12 seconds I felt the fragrance of incense pervading in the room and felt as if there was the presence of some perfect Saint nearby. Shri Gajanana Maharaja also afterwards gave an indication of this by referring to the matter. That very night Shri Vasudevananda Saraswati accompanied by some other Saint appeared in my dream and expressed his satisfaction, that at last I had got correct guidance on the right path.

Next morning just before day-break, when I was fully awake I saw the form of blue-coloured Shri Vishnu full of light. My mind became more and more engrossed in meditation. Then I began to hear the sound of bells and my concentration increased. Occasionally I could see the orb of the moon, stars and sometimes planets like Venus. For about 8 or 10 days, the orb of the moon appeared to be shining in the Brahmarandhra. For 4 or 5 days after that I could see a small star of blue light of the size of a grain of Jwari which

remained steady for a considerably long time. At present I occasionally see scenes of different colours moving upwards like a film production in a Cinema Theatre.

These are my experiences upto the 26th of May 1940.

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